

No 11

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WIDE AWAKE

A COMPLETE STORY **WEEKLY.** EVERY WEEK.

CUT OUT FOR AN OFFICER;

OR, CORPORAL TED IN THE PHILIPPINES.

By LIEUT. J. J. BARRY.



Rescue coming, but what a mockery! Ted saw almost a dozen bolomen almost within arm's reach of him. "One down, anyway!" jeered the young corporal, aiming his last shot. "I've saved the general to-day!" It was a dying soldier's death—this!

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Cut Out For An Officer

OR,

CORPORAL TED IN THE PHILIPPINES

By **LIEUT. J. J. BARRY.**

CHAPTER I.

A GREAT DAY FOR THE "KID" SOLDIER.

Private Jim Havers was known in the Forty-Second United States infantry as "The Slob."

He lay off now, on the fine, soft grass under a mango tree on the edge of the Laguna de Lanao in the Island of Mindanao, the second largest of the Philippine Islands.

His khaki uniform was spotted, soiled-looking. There were splotches of mahogany-colored mud on his khaki leggings.

"If I was major of this outfit," he began, "I'd do things different."

"How?" challenged Private Riley, lazily. He was a veteran of eight years' service in the United States army.

"There'd be less hiking and more fighting," asserted Private Jim. "Now, I wouldn't wear the men out. I'd give 'em one good sharp battle, chase the Filipinos into the ocean, and have done with this nonsense."

Private Riley yawned, got up, stretched, and walked away.

"I'm just as well pleased, me boy, that ye're not major," was Riley's parting shot over his shoulder.

Three or four soldiers laughed and walked away.

Havers was left with only Private Ted Brisbane to talk to.

"Riley has a big idea of Major Eldredge, hasn't he?" demanded Jim, scornfully.

"I guess he's about as good a major as there is in the army," Ted replied, thoughtfully.

"Good? Oh, bosh! Eldredge is a mossback, I tell you, Brisbane. Now, if I was a major——"

"You—a major?" smiled Ted, amusedly.

Jim Havers sat up, his eyes flaring wrathfully.

"Well, what's so funny about my being a major?" he challenged. "Don't you think I know enough to be an officer?"

"An officer?" Ted repeated thoughtfully. "Why, Jim, to tell you the plain truth, you're a whole mile away from being a good soldier!"

At that Jim sat bolt upright, fire seeming to burn in his eyes.

"What's the matter with me as a soldier?" he demanded.

"That's what a good many have been wondering," Ted laughed. "Oh, keep cool, Jim! Do you want some good advice?"

"I don't need it," came the gruff retort.

"No," smiled Ted. "I never knew a slob who did need advice."

"Slob?" cried Jim, angrily, leaping to his feet. "Get up and say that again."

But Ted still lay on the soft grass, resting on his right elbow.

"What's the use of my getting up, Jim?" he drawled. "It wouldn't do you any good. I can lick you. I did once before, you'll remember, when you sneered at the State I was born in."

"But what are you calling me a slob for?" demanded Havers, hotly.

"For the same reason that everyone else in the regiment does, I guess," smiled Brisbane, coolly. "That's your nickname, you know."

"Well, maybe I am a bit of a slob," Jim admitted. "I know I don't keep my uniform spotless."

"Nor your rifle, either, Jim. You've been called down a dozen times at inspection, as I remember, for having dirt and grease in your rifle barrel. Look at your uniform; look at those leggings. Think of the number of times you've been called down for having your tent untidy. You know well enough, Jim, that when a soldier is untidy about himself and dirty about his equipment, his officers rate him as a mighty poor soldier."

Jim glanced doubtfully at Ted's uniform, leggings, sombrero, cartridge belt, and bayonet scabbard.

All were spotless, for Ted was one of the neatest men in the regiment, and it was a neat regiment at that.

Man? Well, Ted was just eighteen, and had been in the service but a few months.

He had enlisted at Boston, and had expressed a preference for service in the Philippines.

Havers was from another State near Ted's own.

In a way the two had been friends, both belonging to Captain Bentley's G Company of the Forty-second Infantry.

Yet Ted had not been too friendly. He did not care to be known exactly as a friend of The Slob, who was about as slobby in everything else as he was about himself.

"Why don't you brace up, Jim?" asked Ted, after a moment, when Private Havers had thrown himself on the ground again and lay looking out over the lake.

"What's the use?" asked Jim, discontentedly.

"What's the use of being a soldier at all, if you're not going to be a good soldier?"

"I guess I'm good enough," grunted Jim. "I get my pay all right, and everything else that's coming to me. And I never showed cold feet, did I?"

"Cold feet" is the soldier's term for cowardice. When a soldier is afraid cold chills go chasing down his spine and settle in his feet. Hence he has "cold feet." At least, that's the explanation you'll get in the army.

"No, you're not a cold foot," Ted admitted. "There are mighty few cowards in the regular army. That's because a coward couldn't stand the racket, and he'd run away and keep out of sight anyway. But you don't stand high in the regiment, Jim. Yet there's no reason why you shouldn't. Now, see here, old fellow, why don't you go down to the quartermaster's department now, draw another uniform, leggings, shoes, and hat. Then go off somewhere in the woods and clean yourself up—good! Then put on the new things and come back into camp."

"The fellows wouldn't say a thing to me, would they?" demanded Private Havers, reddening.

"They'd probably guy you," Ted admitted. "But they would have to quit by to-morrow if they found that you went on keeping yourself tidy. Say, now, Jim, will you do it?"

Ted rolled over, looking his comrade earnestly in the eyes.

"What's the use?" he insisted again.

"Get up your own respect, Havers, and make the other fellows respect you more. Give your officers some reason

to take an interest in you. Say, it's a big thing, Jim, to be a good soldier. And it's one of the doggonedest things on earth to be a no-good soldier."

"Who says I ain't?"

Again Jim sat bolt upright.

"Most everybody says you ain't," Ted retorted, unconcernedly. "Now, if you brace up, Jim, and act like a man and look like one, you'll find life a whole lot pleasanter in this regiment."

Jim opened his mouth to speak, but just as he did so young Private Brisbane, looking over his comrade's back, jumped suddenly up.

"Attention!" he muttered to Jim.

That brought Havers to his feet, too.

Captain Bentley, their company commander, was approaching. Regulations required both young men to be on their feet, standing at attention, and then saluting as their officer got near.

Captain Bentley, a fine-looking man of middle age, with hair that was partly iron gray, stopped close to them, after returning the salutes of the two soldiers.

"I've been looking for you, Brisbane," announced the captain. "I have something to tell you that I hope will please you. A week ago, when the mail was going over to headquarters at Zamboanga, I sent a communication to Colonel Carson recommending that you be appointed a corporal. The mail came in to-day, and I'm glad to be able to inform you that Colonel Carson sent your warrant as a corporal."

Ted Brisbane's heart gave a little thump of pride and pleasure, but when he spoke he said very simply:

"Thank you, sir. I appreciate the honor."

"I think you do, corporal," the captain said bluntly, employing our hero's new title for the first time. "I expect, corporal, that you will attend strictly to your new duties, and prove a valuable non-commissioned officer."

"I shall, if it's in me at all, sir," Ted answered, simply.

"Put on your chevrons as soon as you can get them, Corporal Brisbane," Captain Bentley ordered, as he passed the young soldier his warrant.

"Yes, sir. Thank you, sir."

Both soldiers again saluted as the captain turned to walk away.

"Oh, me! Oh, my!" grunted Havers, enviously.

"It's fine, isn't it?" Ted asked, color coming into his already bronzed cheeks.

"I suppose you feel pretty big now," jeered the Slob.

"I feel proud, of course. It'll be good news to send home to the old folks. It'll show them that their kid has been at least attending to his business."

"Oh, you'll have a regular swelled head now," uttered Havers, disgustedly.

"Don't you think it!" Ted snapped, with vigor. "But, say, Jim, wouldn't you like to be a corporal, too?"

"I suppose so," nodded the other. "A corporal doesn't have to walk his beat as a sentry, and there's a heap of other things a corporal gets out of."

"That's talking too much like the Slob, Jim," Ted murmured, earnestly. "You'd be no good as a corporal if all you thought of was the number of things you could get out of doing. A corporal does escape a good deal of drudgery, to be sure, but he has other new duties that a soldier doesn't have."

"You'll be trying for a commission now, I suppose," jeered Jim. "You'll be trying to get through an examination and blossom out as a kid lieutenant, with shoulder-straps on."

"Maybe," smiled Ted. "I'd like it well enough."

Enlisted men in the army are of three different kinds.

First of all there is the private soldier.

Just above him comes the corporal, and above the corporal is the sergeant. Corporal and sergeant are not officers, but are known as non-commissioned officers.

Corporal and sergeant receive their appointments from their colonel, who may revoke the appointment at any time that he sees fit.

The lowest rank of commissioned officer—or "officer," as he is generally called—is a second lieutenant.

The officers of a company are a captain, a first lieutenant, and a second lieutenant.

A battalion consists of four companies. There are three battalions in a regiment. The first of these battalions is commanded by the lieutenant-colonel, the other two battalions being commanded by majors.

The colonel is the commanding officer of a regiment, while above the colonels are the generals.

Not for worlds would Ted Brisbane have confessed it, but he had really enlisted for the sole purpose of working himself up to be an officer.

Cadets who are graduated from the U. S. Military Academy at West Point are appointed as second lieutenants. If there are any vacancies left when the cadets have been appointed, then enough non-commissioned officers are appointed to fill the remaining vacancies in the grade of second lieutenant.

Some of the best officers in the army have thus risen from the ranks.

If Ted Brisbane, as he left the shore of the lake, and started for the camp hidden in under the great grove of trees near by, held himself a little straighter and walked as if treading on air, who can blame him?"

He had won his first step toward making an officer of himself.

"This is a great day for the kid soldier," he thrilled within himself.

For that had been his nickname in the regiment—"the kid."

It was a picturesque, even if not a stirring sight that met his eyes as our hero turned in under the trees.

Here was the battalion camp.

First of all were the headquarters group of tents. Major Eldredge's tent stood at the head of the camp, a rather roomy tent furnished with a cot, chairs, table, and army box the size of a trunk.

Close by stood the tents of the other officers.

Then, beyond, by companies, were grouped the shelter-tents of the enlisted men.

"Pup-houses," these shelter tents are called. They are odd little tents, barely more than two feet in height, six feet long, and just wide enough for two soldiers to crawl in under and sleep.

On the march each soldier carries half of one of these tents, rolled up with his blanket.

There is a jointed stick at the front of the tent, another at the rear, and a rope passing over the tops of the two sticks, and over this rope the tent is stretched.

As Ted strode through the camp he looked for Sergeant Widman, and found him.

"Any orders, sergeant?" Ted asked, halting.

The first sergeant has very much the same position in a company that a foreman occupies in a factory.

"Haven't heard of any orders yet, corporal," replied Widman, a big, powerful Dane and a thorough soldier. "You've got time to get your chevrons now. Why don't you do it?"

"Guess I will," the new corporal replied, and kept on until he reached the big quartermaster tent at the lower end of the camp.

Buying his chevrons, the V-shaped insignia of his new rank, Ted returned to his tent, which he shared with Private Riley.

As Brisbane got out his sewing kit and sat on the ground sewing on the white cloth chevrons, his tent-mate—"bunkie"—Riley, sauntered up.

"Is it a corporal I'm going to be sleeping with?" demanded the young Irishman.

"So it seems," smiled Ted.

"Then I'll be losing me bunkie," grunted Riley.

"Perhaps not. I haven't received any orders to bunk in with another corporal yet. Tell you what, Riley: Go in for being a corporal yourself, and we'll bunk in together."

"I'm afraid not," sighed the Irishman. "Whenever the company's old man"—meaning Captain Bentley—"gets around my way he seems to go suddenly blind!"

Ted, having sewed the much-prized chevrons on, stood up and tried on the jacket.

It wasn't so bad, being a corporal, after all!

"Pass the word for Corporal Brisbane!" rang a voice down the camp from the headquarters group of tents.

"Corporal Brisbane!" sounded on the air.

"Here!" responded Ted, stepping forward.

"Wanted at headquarters!"

Ted Brisbane strode off in haste to respond.

He was on the threshold of learning what it meant to be a corporal!

Lieutenant Myers, battalion adjutant, a trim, youngish little officer, stood waiting before the headquarters tent.

"Corporal Brisbane," began the lieutenant, briskly, "Corporal Meade received a sunstroke to-day. You will take his place on the guard."

"Very good, sir."

"Remain around here until Captain Costigan, officer of the day, gives you your orders."

"Very good, sir."

Ted saluted again as the adjutant turned away.

Then he seated himself on a stool before the guard-tent, awaiting whatever should come in a soldier's life.

His chance was coming soon enough!

Rattling times were right ahead of Eldredge's battalion of the Forty-second!

CHAPTER II.

SPIES IN THE CAMP.

It was within an hour of dark at the close of a hot day. And down there in the Island of Mindanao, less than eight degrees north of the equator, it knew how to be hot!

The day had been a scorcher.

Throughout the day most of the men in Eldredge's battalion, four hundred and fifty strong, had taken things as easily as they could.

Somewhere out in the mountains just to the south of them was Captain Winthrop, with fifty men of his company.

These were absent on a scouting position, doing their best to locate the whereabouts of Alcante, a Filipino half-breed, half revolutionist and half bandit.

Alcante was believed to have with him upwards of fifteen hundred Filipinos, armed to the teeth, who had been terrorizing this southern part of the island for three months past.

Major Eldredge's battalion had been sent out to disperse Alcante and his numerous band.

But the Filipino, in his native jungle, or up in his native mountains, is a hard fellow to catch.

For weeks the major had led his soldiers through those mountains, marching wherever native scouts had led them.

The soldiers were well worn out, nor had they met Alcante.

So now the battalion was back in camp, on the edge of Lanao lake, and Captain Winthrop, the best scout in the regiment, was out with his handful of men operating without the aid of treacherous native scouts.

"Cigars, boss!" hailed a Filipino boy, approaching Ted as he sat outside the guard-tent.

Brisbane looked around to find himself being regarded with curiosity by a Filipino of perhaps eighteen years, a thin, short, wiry-looking chap named Jose.

Jose had a permit to wander through the camp, vending cigars, matches, and other merchandise.

He was believed to be friendly to Americanos, hence his permit.

"I don't smoke," replied Ted.

"Ah, you are new officer?" went on Jose, stopping and eyeing the brand-new chevrons.

"New corporal," our hero corrected.

"One of other corporals killed?" asked Jose.

"Not that I know of."

"Captain Winthrop back yet?" continued Jose.

"Didn't know he was away," retorted Ted, eyeing the Filipino.

"Oh, yes; he went away three day ago; maybe fift' men," hinted Jose, grinning in what was meant to be a friendly way.

"Who told you that?" Ted asked, sharply.

He had little use for Filipinos of any kind, and had no use whatever for those who claimed to be friendly.

"Oh, I hear soldiers talk about it yest'day," Jose responded, carelessly.

This Filipino, who wore no clothing beyond a short, ragged pair of trousers of white cotton, a short blouse of the same cloth open in front, and a tattered straw hat, had seated himself on the ground, the flat round basket in which he carried his cigars and matches being on the ground beside him.

"It seems to me you hear too much," spoke Ted, sharply.

"Oh, I not hear ver' much," replied Jose, still smiling carelessly.

"Soap, senor?" called a laughing voice. "Needles? Thread? An't'ing you wish?"

Jose's sister, Pina, was approaching.

She was even shorter than Jose, rounded, agile, and pretty as a picture in her dark way.

She wore no more clothing than her brother—merely a print dress reaching down to her bare knees.

On her dark hair, instead of a hat, she carried her little basket, for Pina, too, had secured a permit to trade through the camp.

"Nothing wanted," spoke Ted, shortly.

Pina looked at him with coquettish reproach in her eyes.

"You cross, senor?" she pouted.

But Ted, who had been in four fights already with the Filipinos, and who had had one "bunkie" killed through the treachery of these natives, wasted no sympathy on Pina, even if she was pretty.

Rising, he looked inside the tent. Butters, sergeant of the guard, was sitting on the edge of a cot, reading.

"Sergeant," asked Ted, "have you any objection to my driving these Filipino traders away from the guard-tent?"

"They have a permit to trade," replied Sergeant Butters, blowing out a cloud of cigar-smoke.

"Oh, very good, then," replied Ted, turning away.

"You can order 'em away from the guard-tent, I suppose," went on the sergeant of the guard.

"Shall I?" asked Brisbane, halting in the doorway of the tent.

"Yes, if you want to."

"Jose," ordered Ted, stepping outside, "you'll have to

keep away from the guard-tent. Keep your sister away, too."

"But we got permit," insisted the Filipino boy, not offering to rise from his couch on the ground.

"You'll have to keep away from the guard-tent, I say," Ted insisted. "Come! Get up! Vamoose!"

But Jose remained defiantly where he was.

A private of the guard paced up and down before the tent.

"Sentry," called our hero, sharply, "chase these people away from the guard-tent. See that they don't come near again."

Halting and putting his gun at port, the sentry eyed the native pair, both still rebellious.

"You heard the order," grunted the sentry. "Have you got to feel a bayonet before you stir?"

With a surly growl Jose got up, picked up his basket, and slouched away.

But Pina stood her ground long enough to turn her angry, flashing eyes scornfully on our hero.

"You no good!" she taunted.

"Sorry to have the bad opinion of the ladies," smiled Ted, raising his sombrero.

"Come on—scoot!" ordered the sentry.

Then Pina went, but she again flashed her eyes scornfully over her shoulder.

Sergeant Butters stood in the doorway of the tent, looking out.

"What's the matter, corporal? Can't stand the goos, eh?"

"Goo-goo" is one of the contemptuous names the soldiers have for the Filipinos.

"I don't like to see 'em around a guard-tent," Ted nodded.

"They can't steal the tent," remarked Butters.

"No, but they can hang around here on the chance of hearing the officer of the day give his orders," Ted returned.

"And I guess that wouldn't be the first time these brown-skinned little people have done that," murmured Sergeant Butters.

Back of the tent other members of the guard—two corporals and some thirty privates—were building little fires of twigs as the first step in getting their suppers ready.

Ted sauntered around to start his own fire.

This kindled, he put his pint agate cup over the twigs, nearly full of water.

Into this he dropped a generous handful of ground coffee.

Then out came his ration can, into which he dropped four slices of bacon.

As soon as the coffee was made, and set by to cool, our hero put his ration can over the fire.

The bacon had soon sizzled brown.

The coffee, without milk, was sweetened, and three hard-tack were laid upon the ground beside the young corporal.

These made up the supper—as good a meal as a soldier is likely to get when serving in the field.

But Ted ate and drank with relish.

Then, the meal finished, he cleaned cup and can and put them away.

"Attention!" called Butters, suddenly.

Men and non-commissioned officers alike sprang to their feet. The sentry before the guard tent came to present arms, for Captain Costigan, officer of the day, had arrived.

For a moment the captain looked over his guard. Then:

"Corporal Brisbane!"

"Here, sir."

"Follow me."

The captain stalked out a few yards beyond the edge of the camp, Ted keeping close behind.

"Corporal," said the captain, in a low voice, "do you see that bit of jungle at the lake's edge, where the three mango trees are growing up out of the jungle clump?"

"Yes, sir."

"You will take four men to-night, and go into that clump. Go as stealthily as you can. You will constitute outpost number four. Keep close to the water, though concealing yourself and your men. Remain there through the night, and to-morrow until you are relieved."

"Very good, sir."

"Walk the lake especially."

"Yes, sir."

"When things seem quiet one sentry will do, and your other men may sleep."

"Very good, sir."

"That is all, corporal, except to warn you that it is quite likely, any night, that a detail of Alcante's men may try to land at this side of the lake. You understand about giving the alarm if the enemy appear in force?"

"Yes, sir."

"That is all, then. Be vigilant to-night."

"Yes, sir."

As always when answering an officer, Ted had saluted at each order.

"March your men off, corporal, ten minutes after dark."

"Very good, sir."

With a last salute our hero watched his officer stride away.

Things were rapidly growing quiet through the camp. Soon after dark the men, not being allowed to have fires or lights after sundown, would be asleep.

Out around the camp was stretched a thin thread of sentries whose duty it was to give the alarm if an attack should be attempted by night.

In addition a half-dozen outposts, each consisting of a corporal and four men, had been posted in secret places.

An outpost, unlike a sentry, always tries to conceal itself, watching alertly through the day and night, but never giving a sound or a sign unless an alarm becomes absolutely necessary.

To be in command of an outpost in the face of an enemy is a position of great responsibility.

A careless corporal, on outpost, may endanger the whole command with which he serves.

"Which men shall I take, sergeant?" asked Ted, halting before Butters.

"Hawkes, Anderson, Dill, McCarty," reeled off the sergeant of the guard.

Ted found his men and notified them.

Then he went back to a stool before the guard tent.

Darkness fell, and the members of his squad came up one after the other.

"Magazines loaded?" Ted inquired.

Each man in turn threw open the breech of his Krag-Jorgenson rifle.

"All right. Fall in by twos," ordered the young corporal. "Forward, march!"

He himself, throwing his rifle at ready in the hollow of his left arm, led the way.

It was more than an eighth of a mile past the camp's border, this clump of jungle that had been selected for outpost number four.

They were almost at the jungle, and traveling in single file now, when Ted thought he saw an indistinct flash of white through the bushes near.

"When you see a fellow who looks suspicious," he instructed, turning to his men, "try him in this fashion."

Bringing his rifle to the position of "charge bayonets," Ted dashed through the bush.

Whump! Ugh!

The muzzle of the young corporal's rifle had landed squarely in the pit of the stomach of Jose, who went down with a gasp.

"Hullo!" muttered Ted, in pretended surprise. "I didn't know there was any prowler here. What have you to say, Jose?"

Jose opened his mouth, but he couldn't say anything. His wind was too far gone for that.

Ted turned, looking his men over for an instant.

"McCarthy," directed our hero, "fix your bayonet. Now, get this goo-goo on his feet and run him back to the guard-house. Report that we found him following us. If he makes a sound, or bothers you in any way, run him through. Understand?"

"Yes," growled McCarty, who hated all these little brown people. "And glad enough I'll be to do it."

"Watch him sharply."

"If he tries any shines with me," vaunted McCarty, "he will be a good goo-goo forever after!"

"But I have permit," Jose began, wailingly.

"You won't have after to-night, I guess," muttered Ted, lightly. "You'll be in the prison squad after this. Take him back, McCarty. Forward, men."

Leading the three remaining men, Ted reached the clump that was to serve as shelter for the outpost.

He led his little force through the thick tangle of brush until they were almost at the water's edge.

From here they could look out over the lake.

"None of you want to sleep yet I suppose?" queried Ted.

The men shook their heads.

"Then spread out a bit, and keep your eyes open."

Save for the hum of the mosquitoes, and the soft plashing of the water on the beach, all was still out there.

As for the camp, not a sound came from that direction.

Ted stepped a little away from his men, close to the trunk of a tree, and peered up into its branches, wondering if they offered a good shield for a man to climb up there and watch when daylight came.

Whizz! Well enough the young corporal knew that deadly sound.

Like a flash he ducked, but he would have been too late had the assailant's aim been good.

Chug! A short, heavy-bladed bolo struck the tree just over his head, then fell to the ground.

For just an instant Corporal Brisbane's eyes rested on the bolo, a short, heavy blade like a butcher's cleaver.

Then he wheeled about in the direction from which the weapon had come.

A soft step ahead of him. Ted darted almost noiselessly toward the spot of that step.

But he stopped, after going a hundred yards.

"Noiseless as a mosquito, and as swift!" he uttered, grimly. "The scoundrel gets in, and then away again. But it wasn't Jose, unless McCarty has been killed."

Realizing the hopelessness of finding the unknown assassin in that dense, black jungle, Ted wheeled and made his way back to the outpost.

"One bolo already!" he whispered to his men. "It shows what to look for to-night."

"It'll be a murderous night, I'm thinking," muttered Private Dill, with a grim shake of his head.

Dill had been twenty years in the army.

Corporal Ted Brisbane knew that he and his men were in for it!

CHAPTER III.

A MURDEROUS NIGHT ON OUTPOST.

"Hist!"

Private Hawkes threw his rifle at ready, one hand on the bolt, and stole backward through the jungle.

An enemy was scarcely likely to signal his coming, but it paid to take no chances.

"Me—McCarty!" came a whisper. "And two others."

Hawkes, nevertheless, held his rifle at ready until McCarty was close enough for his uniform and his face to be seen.

Behind him trod two other privates, Colquitt and Abend.

"Captain Costigan was glad of the prisoner, and sent

two more men, corporal, with orders to keep two sentries awake at a time," Private McCarty reported.

"Keep your eyes open to-night, men," cautioned Ted, exhibiting the bolo that had come near finishing his life. "There was one prowler around, and there may be others."

For the next two hours they waited and listened.

Once in a while they fancied they heard noises, slight ones.

At such times Ted sent two men out together, to prowl cautiously.

Yet they found no one.

Dill and Andersen were watching what they could see of the lake's surface.

It was a pity that one pair of eyes there in the jungle did not gleam with real fire enough to betray themselves.

Pina, quivering with anger and hate, stole softly about, listening and watching.

"That corporal!" she hissed to herself. "He missed my bolo, but another shall find him this night!"

Ten o'clock came.

Dill and Andersen, having been relieved, and Colquitt and Abend posted in their places, Ted directed those off duty to spread their blankets.

"But sleep close together, under a sentry's eyes," Ted cautioned. "The fellow who sleeps away from the crowd to-night isn't likely to wake up!"

Every man of them realized that it was to be a night of the keenest risks, yet the four off duty lay down on their blankets and were quickly asleep.

"You don't sleep, corporal?" whispered Abend.

"My first night on outpost in charge?" retorted Ted. "My eyes are open until after daylight. I'm going to the rear of the outpost. Call me if you see or hear anything. Don't fire a shot, though, unless you absolutely have to. We don't want to proclaim to the enemy where we are."

It was an eerie, awesome feeling that stole over the boy, as, thirty feet from his two wakeful men, he stood leaning against a tree-trunk, waiting, watching, listening.

So stealthily did these Filipino woodsmen steal about in the night that one could never guess when there were fifty of them almost within arm's reach.

"Hist!" Ted started.

A friend, most likely, but one never could tell.

Ahead of him a figure moved softly, slowly, but steadily toward him.

Ted held his rifle, cocked, in instant readiness to fire.

"Officer of the day!" came a soft whisper.

Still Ted stood ready to shoot until he recognized Captain Costigan coming close through the darkness.

"Good!" nodded that officer. "I see you're awake, corporal."

"I shan't sleep until after daylight, sir."

"Any signs of trouble?"

The young corporal quickly told of the throwing of the bolo.

"That may be simply a ruse to make the outpost ner-

vous," murmured Costigan. "Still, if I know anything of the goo-goos, it predicts trouble."

Costigan stepped through the outpost, noting how the men were disposed.

"Your little camp is well arranged for business, corporal," approved the officer of the day, when he came back. "I'm going now."

"May I call two men to go back to camp with you, sir?" begged Corporal Ted. "I'm afraid bolomen may try for you."

"Nonsense! I've got my revolver," replied Captain Costigan, drawing that weapon. "A sharp watch, corporal!"

The officer of the day disappeared in the darkness.

Midnight came, and Ted again changed the guard, McCarty and Hawkes taking the watch this time.

"Be careful, men," he whispered to the new sentries. "You know that between midnight and two o'clock is the favorite time for Filipino villainy."

Then back Ted stole to his own chosen post.

It was hard keeping awake thus, the night through, while standing motionless.

But young Brisbane, with his chevrons only a few hours old, fought off drowsiness.

An hour more passed. Then came the cautious signal from the camp side.

"All safe, corporal?" hailed young Lieutenant Jack Prouty, of Ted's own G company. Several men trailed behind the officer.

"All safe here, sir—at last accounts," Ted replied, saluting.

"I wish I could say as much all around," uttered the lieutenant, huskily, and the boy suddenly saw that there were tears in his young officer's eyes.

"Poor Captain Costigan! He was away so long that I was awakened and sent out with this squad to look for him. We found him, half-way between here and camp."

"Hurt, sir?"

"Killed," choked the lieutenant. "He had been struck on the side of the head with a bolo. Then, after he fell, his head was chopped clean from his shoulders."

"I asked him to take two men back for escort," gasped Ted, feeling sick at the news.

"I wish to heaven he had done it," sighed the lieutenant. "But he didn't, and now we're a mighty good officer short. Let's look through your camp, corporal."

"I was through, hardly five minutes ago, sir," Ted replied, leading the way.

"Corporal!" came McCarty's whispered hail.

Both Ted and the lieutenant stepped swiftly forward.

The Irish soldier, with a face on which horror was written, was standing looking down at all that was left of the Swede, Andersen.

That poor fellow lay in a pool of warm blood. From the trunk of the unfortunate's neck blood was still flowing.

"He was alive, three minutes ago!" whispered the Irishman, in a daze of horror.

Lieutenant Prouty dashed back to his own file of six men.

"Scatter and search!" he commanded. "Shoot any enemy you see, but be careful not to hit one of our own men. And don't fire at shadows. Quick, men!"

The six soldiers disappeared into the jungle, going stealthily in different directions.

The lieutenant returned to our hero's side.

"A devilish job, that!" muttered the young officer. "Must have been done just the instant before I came up."

"And not a sound to be heard!" throbbed Ted. "The poor fellow's head clean off, too! Lieutenant, sir, am I at fault for this?"

"How could you be?" asked Prouty, quickly. "You were alert. I know that. And your men were well posted. No, it wasn't your fault. I shall so report."

Ted heaved a sigh of relief. He had feared to be held to blame for this tragedy on his first night in command of an outpost.

"The infernal fiends!" choked Purdy, still glancing down at the headless corpse of the dead soldier. "First the captain, and now a good man who slept within a few feet of an active sentry. These goo-goos must be in league with the Evil One himself."

One after the other the six soldiers returned, reporting their failure to find any foe lurking in the jungle.

"Of course," sighed Lieutenant Prouty. "At night these Filipinos have the cleverness of Old Nick at floating into a jungle and out again. They must travel on the air without touching ground! Corporal, I shall leave Private Blodgett with you, and take this poor, murdered fellow back with me."

"May I call all the men, and keep them awake until daylight, sir?"

"By all means, corporal. Good-night."

"Good-night, sir!"

Ted awoke the sleepers. His squad of six men he now formed, with himself as seventh, in a circle so compact that it was impossible to see how an enemy, no matter how stealthy, could steal in through the line.

"Never before did I want so much to see daylight!" throbbed the new corporal.

Nor would the strain have been as great had he not been in command here in the depths of a jungle that seemed the abode of secret murder.

"What's that?" whispered Hawkes, who stood at the corporal's right.

They both listened. The whole human circle of seven peered into the blackness.

Were these human sounds that they heard, or merely the faint stirrings of the breeze on that hot tropical night.

Figures that the soldiers could not see were moving in the blackness as Pina, the revengeful, stealthily piloted some two-score of armed, brown little men into position not far ahead of Ted.

Crack! Just a single shot—a spiteful flash of red ahead in the jungle.

Hawkes, on one side of our hero, fell. Colquitt, on the other side, too, went down.

Swiftly on the heels of that signal shot came the volley from two score of Mauser rifles at deadly close range.

Right ahead of the few doomed men the flashes from the rifles formed a straight line of belching, continuous scarlet.

Ss-ss-ssoo! sped the pest of steel-jacketed bullets.

That withering volley raked through the outpost.

Instantly following the volley came the command, in Spanish:

"Charge! Wipe out the last Americano!"

Corporal Ted Brisbane had not even time to see how many, if any, of his men had lived through the volley.

He himself was alive and standing, though his left shoulder burned painfully.

"Fire!" he shouted. "Then stand firm!"

Crack! His own rifle spoke in the faces of the hostile crew closing in on him at arm's length.

CHAPTER IV.

PINA'S INNING AT REVENGE.

Ted alone was left standing.

Not one of his men had been killed outright, but all were writhing with wounds.

Around the erect boy the swarming goo-goos closed.

Swish! Crash! The first Filipino to get within arm's length went down with a broken head as Ted's butt landed upon it.

He swung for another enemy.

Whump! Ted himself was down, stunned.

Grimly, a spare little Filipino bent over to give the young corporal the finishing touch with a dagger.

But Pina, darting in like a flash, threw herself across his body.

Within an ace came she of being pierced by that cold steel aimed at Ted's heart.

"No, no, no!" she cried, her eyes flashing with deep hate. "He is mine—this Americano! Take him away for me, since I served you by bringing you here!"

It was well for poor Ted that he was unconscious. He was spared a fearful sight that he could not have prevented.

Hacking and slashing, with bolos and knives, in a few lightning-like seconds the Filipinos had butchered the last of Ted's unfortunate outpost.

But there was swift work cut out for these marauders.

They must get away from here with the speed of the wind.

Already, beyond any possible question, American reinforcements had started from that silent camp beyond—had started almost before the noise of that tragic volley had died away.

Swiftly these little brown prowlers divided into little bands, stealing away in different directions under cover of the darkness.

With one group went handsome, vengeful Pina, her gaze riveted on two men who carried unconscious Ted.

"Fire! Rake the jungle!" sounded Captain Bentley's voice.

In a twinkling American army bullets filled the air.

They sped in pests by Pina, but she heeded not.

One of Ted's bearers went down, but another took his place, and Pina, snatching up the wounded man's rifle and ammunition belt, followed on in the wake of those who bore her young enemy.

A few of the Filipinos were captured in the forests within the next quarter of an hour—though not enough to balance the butchered outpost.

The rest got away in the darkness, in which it was almost folly to follow these swift, silent, bare-footed little bandits.

It was almost an hour later when Corporal Ted Brisbane awoke to a knowledge of what was going on around him.

His hands bound beneath him, and his feet tied to a stake driven in the ground, he lay on his back.

He came to with a shuddering start. Then he opened his eyes.

"So! You are awake, my beloved!" cried Pina, mockingly.

"The dev——" Ted began, but checked himself.

"Oh, yes—a woman devil!" uttered Pina, joyously. "And very glad I am, my brave Americano, to have you for my own—to do as I please with! You chased us off in your camp to-night. You captured my poor brother, and sent him in a prisoner. Well, we are even, young senor! You are my prisoner, and I am to do with you just as I please. Oh, I shall enjoy myself—so!"

Drawing from her shining black hair a tiny stiletto, Pina jabbed it into the fleshy part of Ted's leg.

"Oh, you squirm beautifully!" she jeered, in Spanish, as the young corporal twisted his leg with the smarting pain. "But I can prick you wherever I want to!"

She pushed the point of the blade a hair's-breadth into his sun-browned throat.

"Drive it home!" dared the young corporal, looking contemptuously up into those gleaming, handsome, wicked young eyes that bent over him.

"And kill you all at once, Senor Americano?" leered the girl. "Lose the half of my delight. Oh, no, no, no! You shall squirm much—many times! It shall be a long time before you die. And I—I shall sit and count your cries for mercy. You shall learn how I can hate—and torment—my poor brother's enemy. Indeed, I shall save a part of your life until I know just what your big, rough, brutal Americano soldiers have done with my dear Jose. Whatever they do to him, a hundred times more I shall do to you—and then kill you at last!"

Pina laughed as softly as if she were proposing nothing wicked.

"You little monster!" snorted Ted.

"A monster?" she cried, delightedly. "Oh, senor, you will think that a tame word before you are through with the attentions of your devoted Pina."

"Suppose some of my comrades should hear about it?" hinted Ted.

Pina shrugged her shapely, brown, bare little shoulders.

"What would I care?" she smiled. "Your Americano soldiers are fools. They spare the Filipino women. They do not seem to know that it is we women who spur the men on. It is we who caused the fighting with the Americanos, and it is we who will see that the fighting goes on as long as there is a single Americano soldier in these islands. But you are making me talk and forget my pleasures this night. So! How was that? Delightful, eh?"

The pretty, mocking enemy had jabbed her tiny stiletto in the calf of Ted's leg again.

Try as he would, he could not keep wholly back the sharp gasp of pain that came to his lips.

The tiny jabs amounted to little more than a vicious thrust with a needle, but each blow stung indescribably.

"I shall probably kill you so," murmured the little wretch in petticoats. "Just keep on prodding until the pleasure wears you out and you forget to breathe."

Ted shuddered despite himself. He did not doubt that the girl was capable of any wickedness toward him.

"Now, senor, I think I will wait for daylight, so that I can see better what I am doing," smiled the girl, settling herself back. "That is, unless I see you falling asleep. Then I shall remind you to keep awake."

"She'll keep me awake, too, the little witch!" quivered the young corporal, inwardly. "She's more wicked, to the square inch, than Old Nick himself!"

Left now to his own thoughts, Ted realized that his left shoulder was throbbing from a bullet wound.

His head ached fearfully from the blow with the butt of a Mauser rifle that had felled him.

"I think I see my speedy finish!" thought Brisbane, grimly, and not without a dread that must come even to the bravest soldier. "Possibly Eldredge's battalion will work around this way, but Pina would surely kill me sooner than let me escape."

Ted looked around him, in the darkness, wondering how far he was from the battalion camp.

As it was still dark, and he had probably been captured later than one o'clock in the morning, he figured that he could not be many miles distant from his American comrades.

Here and there a few shadowy forms showed at intervals. They were the figures of Filipino "soldiers," as these little brown bandits loved to call themselves.

Presently a young Filipino officer strolled up to Pina, speaking to her in one of the native Filipino dialects of Mindanao.

Ted listened acutely, but could not make out a word. American soldiers in the Philippines quickly pick up a

knowledge of Spanish, which is spoken by nearly all of the more civilized natives.

When, however, these natives drop into one of their own tribal languages the soldier is "stumped" to know what they are talking about.

Ted studied this young insurgent officer curiously.

The little brown chap was barefooted, but wore the blouse and trousers that the Filipino "soldier" has adopted from the Spaniards.

The cloth is in narrow blue and white stripes that run lengthwise. It looks like bed-ticking, and makes a serviceable uniform for wear in the jungle.

On the officer's head was a straw hat of sombrero pattern.

Around his waist was a belt from which hung, jauntily, a heavy cavalry saber. This unusual sword, together with a revolver in an army holster, made it appear that the young officer was a man of some importance among these natives.

Moreover, from the ceremonious manner in which he bowed to Pina, and the gleam that flashed from his eyes as he looked at her, Ted jumped at another conclusion:

"This chap is the girl's lover!"

Pina talked back in a purring voice. She laughed and ogled her companion. Plainly she was doing her best to enthrall her admirer.

While they were talking, Pina pointed at Ted.

Soon, after a deep bow and a flourish with his hat, the Filipino hurried away.

"Querido"—(dearest)—cried the pretty witch, mockingly, "we are soon to travel."

Ted did not answer, but looked at her.

"My good friends are going to take you far from here, that I may have you safely to play with."

Still Ted did not answer, and now he looked away from her.

But now a tread of men reached his ears. Four men, carrying a bamboo stretcher, trotted up.

"Your coach is ready!" laughed Pina.

All bound as he was, Ted was lifted on to the stretcher. This, in turn, was raised to the shoulders of the four men.

Away they went, at a steady trot. Though they followed a path, often they went through jungle so thick that the branches of bushes switched the young American in the face.

At times the bearers slackened their trot to a walk. At others they halted for a few minutes of rest. Yet, on the whole, they kept up a good pace through the jungle.

They were still on their journey when daylight arrived and the sun came up.

Yet there, in the cooler shade of the thick Philippine forest, Corporal Ted Brisbane heard no sounds except the movements of his bearers and the songs of the birds.

"We must be making three miles or more an hour," thought Ted. "If these rascals don't quit traveling soon

I'll be too far away from the good old battalion ever to get back to it!"

Well enough he knew that Pina did not intend that he should ever get back to his friends alive.

Hope, though, is always springing up in the human breast.

Corporal Ted could not bring himself to believe that he was a doomed youngster.

Some two hours after sunrise his bearers halted long enough to eat a hasty meal from the contents of the pouches that they wore at their waists.

Then onward they went again for another couple of hours.

Finally they came out of the forest, crossing an open, upward slope near the base of a mountain.

"They know they're a good way from the Americans, or they'd never show themselves in open country like this," flashed through the boy soldier's mind.

Across the open and into another fringe of forest they went.

Five minutes later the bearers were halted by a challenge in Spanish.

"A camp? It must be that of Alcante, the brigand chief himself," quivered Ted.

Two minutes later he found himself riding through another open space, between little groups of curious Filipino "soldiers."

Here there was a camp beyond a doubt, with several hundreds of little brown men in the bed-ticking uniforms.

Over beyond was a Filipino village of fifteen or twenty native houses, built of bamboo and straw thatch.

And just beyond the village ran a river.

"Alcante's real headquarters, that our men have been trying so hard to find," thrilled Ted. "I must be the first American to have found the place. Whew! Now, if I could only get back to Major Eldredge. Then I'd have won these corporal's chevrons in earnest!"

Whump! Just past the village, not many yards from the river, these brown bearers dropped the stretcher without ceremony.

"Ouch!" Ted felt that jarring drop disagreeably along his spine.

But he did not complain. Laughing Filipino "soldiers," some armed and some not, crowded around for a look at the prisoner.

"Soon you shall have the barber, Americano!" shouted one grinning wretch, making a slashing motion across his own throat.

Other jeers and jibes were rained at the helpless boy, lying there on his back, bound too securely to move.

Pit-pat! Pit-pat! The clatter of the hoofs of native ponies, and then the crowd fell back, murmuring:

"El General!"

A couple of riders dashed up, drawing rein so close that they could look down into the young prisoner's face.

The general? Then that young officer was Alcante him-

self, for the horseman was the young officer who had talked with Pina.

There by his side, on the other pony, was the bewitching little brown girl herself.

"He is yours, querida," murmured Alcante, turning to Pina. "Oh, but you should have rare sport with him! Enjoy yourself, my little queen! My men will carry out any orders you are pleased to give."

With a flourish of his straw sombrero, Alcante, the insurgent general—or bandit chief, as the Americans chose to regard him—rode off.

As for Pina, she leaped lightly from the saddle to the ground, turning the bridle of her mount over to a soldier who sprang forward to take it.

"You must be glad to see me again," she smiled, mockingly, as she seated herself, with her bare heels curled up under her, at the boy's side.

"Oh, delighted, of course," Ted grunted, grimly.

"Not as much as I am, though," went on this pretty girl, her eyes gleaming wickedly. "For I have come to see you die! Here we are far from your Americano soldiers, and now you are to die the death of torture!"

Ted started, in spite of his great courage.

Fearful tales he had heard of how these savage Filipinos killed their white captives by torture.

He had heard of the finding of awfully mutilated bodies of American soldiers who had gone to death under this wicked Malay torment.

"You are scared, at last. You forgot to be brave," she taunted, studying his face with inhumane delight. "So! An Americano can know what fear is."

"You won't find any fear in me!" boasted Ted, his eyes flashing fire. "Start as soon as you like. I am ready to die. I will show you how an American soldier can die! I shall die like a soldier—and in the uniform of my good old country!"

"Eh?" broke in the girl, suddenly. "So you are proud that you are to die an Americano—in that Americano uniform of yours? Oh, we shall see?"

Clapping her hands together, Pina next leaped to her feet.

At the summons a dozen Filipino soldiers ran up.

They listened attentively, while she addressed them rapidly in their own tribal language.

Then, grinning, they hurried away.

Pina too stole off.

"Now, what new rascality are they up to?" groaned the anxious boy.

He was not left guessing long.

One of the returning insurgents carried over his arm a uniform of the blue and white bed-ticking pattern.

Another carried a small pot of something.

Slash! One of the little brown rascals, behind our hero, began to cut away that beloved American uniform.

Strip! Ted's uniform left him, piecemeal.

Almost in a twinkling he was naked.

Now, four of the strongest freed his hands and feet and jerked him to his feet.

For just an instant Ted debated the idea of laying out with his fists.

But the sight of several drawn knives close to him changed his mind.

"It would do no good," he concluded. "These hounds want to drive me into fighting. Then they'd carve me up. I won't give 'em the excuse."

As they held him, they forced on the hideous blouse and trousers of bed-ticking.

Next they threw him down again to the ground, three of their number holding him.

Slash! Corporal Ted Brisbane began to realize the whole scheme.

Not only had these mischievous little brown fiends stripped him of his khaki uniform and put on the insurgent colors instead, but they were now engaged in staining his skin as brown as their own!

First his face, then his hands and arms, up to the elbows. The stuff dried rapidly on his skin.

His trousers were short for him. These tormentors stained his feet and the legs up above the knees.

Even his hair, already a dark brown, received an additional color shade from the stuff in the dye-pot.

Within ten minutes Ted Brisbane found every visible inch of his skin a mahogany brown.

And now, as these crude artists stood back, grinning, from their hurried job, Pina glided up.

At sight of the transformed young American the girl fell back, laughing.

"Oh, my dear Americano!" she mocked. "I am more in love with you than ever. But now you cannot hope to die like an Americano! You are one of us—you shall die a brave Filipino soldier!"

The hollow mockery of it all made Ted Brisbane tingle with wrath and shame!

CHAPTER V.

THE WHITE SCOUNDREL.

Then, as the pretty, brown, wicked, little girl gazed at her victim, she laughed more loudly still.

"Oh, but I shall have to show you, querido mia, to one who will laugh with me!" she chuckled.

Turning, she gave a rapid order to one of the soldiers nearby.

That little chap went off at a rapid run.

Within five minutes he returned, followed by a much taller man in the Filipino uniform.

This newcomer, though in the native uniform, was as white as our hero himself had been before the staining.

"Filson!" shouted Ted, unbelievably.

The white man in Filipino garb stopped, staring hard.

"Who are you that talks to me in English?" demanded this newcomer, stopping short and resting tremblingly on the butt of his rifle while the muzzle dug into the ground.

"Filson, what are you doing here?" bellowed Ted.

For the moment our hero had forgotten everything save that here was a man, a soldier in the good old Forty-second United States Infantry, who now carried a Mauser rifle, and wore the accursed blue and white uniform.

"Well, who are you, my bucko?" demanded Filson, swaggeringly, now that he was regaining his assurance. "You look like a Filipino, and talk like a doughboy."

"Doughboy" is army slang for an infantryman.

"I am a doughboy," Ted replied hotly. "Out of your own regiment, too. But I'm not walking about free in a bandit camp. Filson, you accursed deserter——"

"Stop that talk!" raged Filson, starting forward.

"I won't stop it!" Ted uttered, hoarsely. "Oh, you cur! Well, shoot, if you want! A scoundrel who'd desert his colors and go over to the enemy would even shoot a helpless man. You miserable deserter! And the regiment believed you had been cut down while out on sentry duty. You were believed to have died like a man, while you lived like an unutterable scoundrel! Your name was given a place on the regiment's roll of honor, when you deserve a place on the tablets of shame! You scoundrel! You deserter! You TRAITOR to the Stars and Stripes!"

"Go on!" sneered Filson, who had turned a ghastly white, with little tints of green showing on his skin. "Go on and rant, you little doughboy pup! What do I care?"

"No, of course you don't care!" quivered Ted. "A man who'd desert his country and turn traitor to the colors he had sworn to serve has no sense of shame left! Yet even the Great Father in the heaven above us must feel a sense of shame when He looks down and sees that one created in His image can be so great a scoundrel! Why, even your poor old mother would try to strangle you if she could see you now!"

"Quit talking like that!" roared the deserter, turning from white to an angry purple, and once more striding toward the boy.

As he stepped, Filson raised his rifle as if to fire.

No one, not even Pina, attempted to interfere by word or gesture.

That wicked little witch, in fact, hugely enjoyed this angry scene between the two Americanos.

"Say another word," dared Filson, "and I'll put a bullet through you!"

All the others had stepped aside, except the two Filipinos who held our hero's arms on either side.

Wrench! With a purpose born of desperation Ted jerked himself free.

With a cry of terror now, Filson fired, as he saw the young corporal shake off the captors, and leap at him.

But the deserter's hands trembled. He missed his aim.

Flop! In under the rifle ducked infuriated Ted Brisbane.

Jerk! He twisted that Mauser out of the white scoundrel's hands.

It was all done in a flash, ere any of the startled on-lookers had the presence of mind to try to interfere.

Filson, uttering a shriek of terror, turned to run.

Crack! Ted's aim was better than the deserter's had been.

A steel-jacketed bullet sped into the deserter's worthless carcass.

He dropped.

"Seize the Americano!" yelled Pina.

Ted turned the muzzle of the rifle full on her, fire flashing from his eyes.

She shrank back in terror from before that awful gaze.

"If anyone stirs I kill the girl," roared the boy.

On the ground lay Filson, badly wounded and groaning with agony.

Coolly enough Ted Brisbane held the muzzle of the rifle within two feet of the deserter's head.

Crack! The infamous American deserter had ceased to live!

All in a second this happened.

Now Ted turned. With the speed of the sprinter he raced to the river not many yards away.

"Shoot!" shrieked Pina.

Three shots rippled out.

Splash! Not hit, Ted dove headlong into the current.

"Kill him! Don't let the Americano get away!" screamed Pina.

More than a dozen armed Filipinos ran to the river bank. Quiveringly they waited until our hero's head showed above water, a hundred yards out from shore.

Now a scattering but swift volley rang out.

Again Ted sank, nor did he come up.

If one brave American life had been lost, at least another forfeited American life had gone into the next world with him.

Filson would never work harm against his country, nor betray his brave comrades again.

Pina, utterly enraged over the failure of her plans, danced on the river's bank, mad with fury.

"Find the Americano's body!" she implored, quiveringly. "At least we will find that carcass, hack it to pieces and feed it to the vultures!"

CHAPTER VI.

IN TIME—TO BE SHOT.

But Ted Brisbane had not been even winged by that volley.

A splendid swimmer, he now swam under the surface of the swift current.

In keeping under water he was greatly helped by the

weight of the steel in the Mauser rifle, which he still gripped tightly in his left hand.

For some moments he swam, aided by the swift current.

As he did so he tried for the further bank of the river, which was not wide.

It seemed impossible to keep under water a single instant longer.

Air—his lungs must have air! They seemed bursting!

His head swam!

Half unconscious, he was on the point of giving up, when his outstretched right hand touched a water plant.

He had crossed the river, was close to the bank.

Now he found himself beside a clump of water plants whose tops reached above the surface.

A step, and he was in among them, his head cautiously raised above the surface.

Screened by the leaves, he could peer across the river.

There stood Pina, angrily directing some Filipino soldiers who were rushing up with a small canoe on their shoulders.

"No telling how long I'll be safe here," chattered Corporal Ted. "I wonder if I can't crawl up on the bank and squirm on my belly into the forest?"

If he could cross but a dozen feet of soil at the bank he would be behind the thick screen of the jungle.

Surely it looked well worth trying. It was the only hope of escape.

Uttering a fervent prayer, Brisbane crawled out of the water upon the bank.

Not daring to rise, he squirmed, snake-fashion, as swiftly as he could.

Great! He had passed behind the screen without hearing any sound from across the river to indicate that his move had been discovered.

For full five minutes our hero rested behind the screen of leaves, watching three Filipinos in the launched canoe.

Following Pina's orders, they were paddling up and down the current, peering down into the water.

"If that's where they're looking for me, good luck to 'em!" grinned the American boy. "Now, if I can only find the good old battalion."

Then, with a shudder, he thought of the treachery of Private Filson, late of the Forty-second, a man who had been believed to have died a soldier's honorable death.

"I'm glad I got him!" gritted the boy soldier, between his teeth.

Not once did he feel sorry for having killed the wretch. It is any soldier's duty to kill a traitor when he finds one.

Rested a bit, our hero began to think of the necessary task of getting away from Alcante's camp.

As he looked across the river now he saw at least three hundred of the insurgent troops in sight. They were either at the river's edge or gathered in little groups close by.

Alcante himself had appeared, close at Pina's side.

Three "soldiers" were toting a second canoe.

But Ted saw this craft only out of the corner of his eye.

He had thrust the Mauser carefully through the leaves, and was taking careful sight along the barrel.

"Alcante gone will be a great thing for our cause!" muttered the young corporal.

Another second, and the "general" undoubtedly would have dropped—at the cost of the young corporal's own life within a few moments.

But just then the general stepped back.

He was shielded now by the bodies of two or three ordinary insurgents.

"I'll wait for you, my prize!" muttered Ted, as he lay there, his eye watching through the rifle's sights, and his finger on the trigger.

But Alcante, leaving Pina behind, walked off in the midst of a crowd of his men.

"Cheated!" grunted Brisbane, disgustedly, giving never a thought to the certainty that a single shot from him would result in a pursuit that must wind up in his own death.

Alcante had disappeared behind a clump of trees over yonder.

"That doesn't leave much for me to do but to attend to my own safety," sighed Corporal Ted.

He looked about him, then rose cautiously, keeping the deep shade between himself and the view of those across the river.

Slowly, carefully, his eyes wide open and his ears listening alertly, the boy soldier made his way carefully into the jungle.

There was danger, indeed, in this great forest, where he had no means of knowing how many Filipinos lurked.

Yet, by degrees, he progressed half a mile without running into any danger that he was aware of.

Once he looked into the breech of his Mauser, counting the cartridges still left in the magazine of the weapon.

There were four of them.

Suddenly he came to a dead stop.

Ahead, hardly more than a dozen yards away, was the edge of the forest, the beginning of a great clearing.

Away beyond stretched a huge mountain peak—Mount Diablo, as he well knew from having been up in that mountain a few weeks before, on a hard forced march with the battalion.

"Blazes! I'm a good, hard fifteen miles from where our camp was yesterday!" he uttered, in consternation. "Fifteen miles to dodge these little brown foes, who sneak in the forest like wildcats, is no kind of a merry jest!"

For some minutes the young corporal remained here, screened in a thick clump of jungle.

He wanted to "get the lay" of the country, and make up his mind just what to do in the effort to get back to Major Eldredge's command.

Out across the open he saw a Filipino officer and a squad of a dozen soldiers suddenly appear.

Then, from the jungle, not far away, came a hailing human voice.

Out from the edge of a forest stepped a Filipino officer,

walking along close to the trees, as if waiting for the on-coming squad.

"Now, what's up?" quivered Ted.

The officer who had come out of the jungle had halted, not more than forty feet away from the young American corporal.

Towards this officer came the hurrying squad.

As they met the two little brown officers saluted, joyously.

Then they spoke in Spanish.

"Well, captain?" hailed the officer who had come out of the forest.

"Most excellent news, colonel," replied the officer at the head of the squad.

"You have found the flying Americanos?"

Ted understood, as by a flash, that they referred to Captain Winthrop's scouting company, which had been out for some days.

"They are up behind Mount Diablo," replied the commander of the Filipino scouts, pointing back at the peak.

"Coming this way?"

"Yes; along the Mission trail."

"Good! Then it must be that the flying Americanos will come through the Tres Angeles pass."

"They will be there in two hours," replied the scouting officer.

"General Alcante will be overjoyed."

"Why should he not be? There is time enough to move his men up and ambush the flying Americanos in the pass. He can kill the last Americano of them all."

"We must hasten, captain, with the full news! Oh, our general will be overjoyed."

Into the forest dove the two officers and the scouts, leaving Corporal Ted Brisbane quivering with the news that he had heard.

Then, as he gazed out into the open, the young corporal gave a gulp of despair.

How to get to his comrades?

For the only direct path lay across this great open space.

To go around by the forest would consume two or three hours of valuable time.

In that amount of time Alcante would move his own forces forward, have them in place, and all posted for the massacre of Captain Winthrop's little command.

Then, as it happened, in his perplexity, he glanced down toward his own bare feet.

He started, with a thrill of joy.

"Now, blessings on that wicked little beauty, Pina!" he glowed, fervently.

For the idea had reached him!

His skin had been stained brown—he wore the insurgent uniform—carried a Mauser rifle.

Out there beyond, in the open, if he were seen by watchful eyes, he would be mistaken for a Filipino!

"Unless I am recognized as the painted-up American," he thrilled. "But I may not be recognized. No one can distinguish my face at a few hundred yards."

It was worth the trying, at least.

With never another thought of the danger of being recognized, Corporal Ted stepped out into the open—strode hurriedly along.

He was soon hundreds of yards away from the edge of the forest. He no longer feared being recognized.

Further on, if he ran into other Filipino soldiers, they would know nothing about the Americano prisoner who had been stained and transformed into the semblance of one of themselves. With his knowledge of Spanish he might pass for one of the enemy.

It would be well worth the trying.

Hatless though he was, Ted strode on under that fierce tropical sun.

He was in danger every minute of sunstroke, yet to that he gave never a thought.

Under that blazing sun he reached the lower slope of Mount Diablo.

On and up he strode, over the road that led to the pass of Tres Angeles, which means "Three Angels."

So far he had not seen a sign of Filipino troops.

Yet, as he glanced behind, he caught a distant flashing of the sun on rifle barrels at the rear.

"That's Alcante's columns hurrying forward at the trot!" Ted ejaculated. "Goodness! I've got to hustle, or they'll be at my heels!"

The thought drove him ahead at greater speed.

He was in the pass now, and striding through it—a deep, rock-strewn gap through the mountain.

This pass was half a mile long. Above were sloping cliffs along which an enemy could find many hiding places.

Once the American column had entered this pass, Filipino soldiers, hidden above, could pour down a withering fire that would wipe Winthrop's little command off the face of the earth in sixty seconds!

Still hurrying, almost tumbling forward, Ted kept tirelessly on.

He would be exhausted, later on, but he could not dare to be tired now!

He was out of the pass, hastening forward.

A mile further on, and a sudden turn in the road brought him almost in the arms of a sergeant and half a dozen soldiers in the good old khaki uniform.

Ted knew every one of these men—Sergeant Adams and the six privates of F company!

All in a twinkling Ted Brisbane jerked up, standing stock still.

"Hullo, there, sergeant!" he bellowed.

In the same instant our overjoyed hero held his rifle aloft with both hands, a sign that he did not intend to fire.

Sergeant Adams stared gaspingly at this tall, stalwart young man in the Filipino uniform.

"Shoot!" shouted the sergeant, a second later. "Get him! Don't miss!"

"Stop! Don't!" begged Ted, frantically. "I'm American—belong to the Forty-second—Corporal Brisbane!"

"You're a traitor, then—in that uniform!" roared back the sergeant. "Shoot him, men!"

Swift as thought half a dozen shots rang out.

CHAPTER VII.

IN THE THICK OF TROUBLE.

Even before the flashes jetted out from the muzzles of those Krag-Jorgensen rifles, Ted threw himself flat on the ground.

The volley missed him.

Yet it would need only a second for the soldiers to take new aim and pour a hail of steel into him.

"Wait!" quivered Ted, desperately. "I've come through as a scout! Don't you understand?"

"Eh?" quavered Sergeant Adams. "A scout? Cease firing, men!" he added, rapidly, shouting at the top of his voice.

Then, rushing ahead of his squad, the sergeant sprang to prostrate Brisbane's side.

"What's this you're telling me, kid?" he insisted.

"I've brought a warning. Alcante's insurgents are going to ambush you in the pass beyond."

"What are you doing in that dirty uniform?"

"Captured, and fixed up this way, before getting the death by torture," shot out Brisbane, swiftly. "But I escaped——"

"With a loaded rifle?" sneered the sergeant.

"Yes; I killed a deserter with it—Filson!"

"Tell that to the marines—it won't go down with doughboys!" snorted Sergeant Adams.

Rapid footsteps sounded behind them.

"What did that firing mean, sergeant?" breathlessly demanded Lieutenant Morrow, running up with ten more men.

Now Ted had his innings.

With desperate earnestness he told his strange story.

But the lieutenant, like the sergeant, regarded him coldly.

"Brisbane, this is a pretty tough yarn to swallow," uttered the lieutenant, doubtfully.

"But it's the truth, sir."

"Maybe, but I don't believe you."

"Will you take me to Captain Winthrop, then?" begged the tormented young soldier.

"We'll hold you here until Captain Winthrop comes up," clicked the lieutenant. "Sergeant, hurry on forward with your men."

"If they run into the enemy in the pass——" Ted began, quiveringly.

"Halt a quarter of a mile this side of the pass, sergeant, unless you get further orders," commanded Lieutenant Morrow, crisply.

Then, to Ted:

"Your yarn, like your costume, seem against you, Brisbane. I'm morally certain that Captain Winthrop will order you shot."

"Why?" panted Ted.

"Well, it seems pretty certain that you've deserted to the Filipinos, and that they've sent you forward to give us false information."

A deserter? A traitor? Ted almost sobbed with the shame of this fearful suspicion.

"You'll find soon enough, sir, that I've brought you the straight truth," he protested, with an agitated catch in his breath.

"It's the captain's affair to decide," remarked the lieutenant, stiffly.

And now the steady tramp, tramp of many feet showed that the main column of the company was approaching.

"What was that firing, Mr. Morrow?" hailed Captain Winthrop, moving along ahead of his main column.

"Sergeant Adams encountered and arrested this seeming Filipino, sir," reported the lieutenant, pointing to Ted. "He claimed to be Brisbane, of ours, sir, and so the men fired at him for a traitor."

"Brisbane?" echoed the captain, in astonishment, staring hard at mahogany-hued Ted.

Then, drily:

"If they missed him, our men need practice in squad fire."

"The young rascal threw himself down just before they fired," explained the lieutenant.

Young rascal!

Ted felt the hot flush of shame rising to his brow.

But he saluted the company commander and said, respectfully:

"I should like to tell my story, sir, and warn you of a danger ahead. Your column is being waited for in the pass by ambuscaders."

"Halt!" cried Winthrop, as the head of his company reached him.

Then, to Ted:

"Proceed, Brisbane."

Eagerly, tremblingly, the young corporal poured out his story.

Captain Winthrop heard him attentively.

Then:

"Mr. Morrow, send a corporal and two men ahead to tell Sergeant Adams to fall back on the main column."

As this order was being carried out, the captain called:

"Corporal Higgins!"

"Sir?" cried the corporal, stepping forward and saluting.

"Brisbane is under arrest. Watch him as you would an enemy."

Again Ted started and flushed.

This was all so shamefully different from the reception he had expected to receive at the hands of his fellow-Americans.

"Corporal, keep your prisoner close to the head of the

line, "directed Captain Winthrop. "If we run into treachery through him I want to be sure that the young man has his share of peril."

"My share of peril?" quavered our hero, inside. "How cheerfully I'd meet that if I could do it with a rifle in my hands, fighting like a soldier."

Now the captain, leading the main column in person, with Lieutenant Morrow a couple of hundred yards in advance, gave the order to move onward.

Half a mile from the beginning of the pass they came upon Sergeant Adams and his little advance guard, resting under orders.

Once more Captain Winthrop questioned our hero, but with a cold, unbelieving gaze turned on the boy.

Yet Brisbane told his story in a straightforward way, giving all the particulars just as he had done in the first place.

"If I believed you, young man," commented the captain, "it would make a big difference in my plans."

"May I make a suggestion, sir?" begged the boy.

"Well?"

"Haven't you two or three men, sir, who are old Indian scouts, used to service back on the American plains—genuine old Indian fighters?"

"Yes. Well?"

"Why not remain here, sir, for a while? Why not send your veteran scouts off to find a path high above the pass? They could look down on the cliffs overhanging the pass. They could soon learn whether Alcante's forces are ambushed above the pass."

Winthrop deliberated for a few moments.

"I am trying to see just where your possible treachery lies in this, Brisbane," confessed the company commander. "On the face of it, your advice sounds good, if you told the truth in the first place."

If—? Ted could have thrown himself down on the ground and sobbed out in his misery at being thus suspected by those whom he had tried to save from disaster.

"Oh, I don't care, sir, what you think about me, if you only save your company from being wiped out," he cried, miserably.

"Sergeant Breck!" hailed the captain.

That non-commissioned officer reported, saluting.

He was directed to take two of the men and scout, as Ted had proposed.

The three went down the trail a little way, then vanished from sight.

In the meantime Captain Winthrop, having called in his advance guard, and also its support under Lieutenant Morrow, brought in his little rear guard also, and posted his men so as to guard to the best advantage against any possible surprise.

Thus an hour passed.

Ted felt all the contempt with which he was regarded by the men within view of him.

He was the despised, the suspected traitor; well enough he knew that.

With such disgrace hanging over him, he hoped he would be killed if a fight began.

"Now that they once suspect me they'll always suspect me," he faltered to himself. "Oh, I'd rather be dead! And who knows but what, if I ever reach the battalion alone, I'll be tried, condemned—and shot for a traitor!"

The cold chills went chasing down his spine at that awful thought!

"Or even hanged!" he throbbed. "Merciful heaven! What a fearful thing it is to be suspected of treason when one has risked his life to serve the dear old flag."

Feeling the heat of the sun on his bare head, he had managed to get under a bit of shade.

Yet Corporal Higgins, hawk-eyed, watched him without ceasing.

An hour passed, and another.

Then a man posted far out on the flank of the company, reported that Sergeant Breck and his two men were approaching.

Ere long this trio were back and saluting their commander.

"Well?" demanded Winthrop, eagerly.

"The cliffs above the pass, sir, are lined with Filipinos," reported the sergeant. "This company would be wiped out if ever it got into the pass."

"Now you'll believe me, captain!" throbbed Ted, starting forward.

"Silence, Brisbane," stormed the captain, turning angrily on the boy. "Corporal, see that your prisoner keeps his mouth closed."

"Shut up, you pup!" growled Higgins in the boy's ear.

"Sergeant," demanded the captain, "did you discover a path that we can take up above where the ambushed enemy are waiting?"

"Yes, sir," reported Breck, slowly. "Unless——"

"Go on, sergeant."

"Unless, sir, there is some other trap laid for us that we haven't found out yet."

"I believe we'll try your path, then," decided Captain Winthrop. "Mr. Morrow, take ten men, including one of Sergeant Breck's men as a guide. Follow the path that will take us above the ambuscade. Sergeant Breck, you will remain by me, and act as my guide. Mr. Morrow, we shall wait until you are three hundred yards in advance of us."

Saluting, the lieutenant led his advance guard off at a swinging step.

In war it is a practice to send an advance guard ahead to explore for danger.

The advance guard is always likely to be fired upon. It may be wiped out, in fact, but the sacrifice of an advance guard often saves the main column from being annihilated.

Slowly the main line moved onward.

This path that led above the ambuscade was a narrow one—often hard to see at all.

It was rough, rock-strewn, that led zig-zag up over the slopes.

Yet it was well shielded by trees and shrubs. Here the troops could move with little danger of being seen from a distance.

So, after three-quarters of an hour of climbing, the main column came upon the little, halted advance guard.

"Come forward a few yards, sir," reported Lieutenant Morrow, "and you will be able to look down into the pass. From where I've been waiting, sir, there is a view of the backs of at least fifty of the little brown furies. They're watching that pass as a cat does a mouse-hole."

"Now, perhaps they'll believe that I'm a bringer of straight goods," murmured Brisbane, hopefully, to himself.

The company having halted, Captain Winthrop followed Lieutenant Morrow on ahead.

When the captain came back he led the company stealthily along the path.

Thus, after a little, the line was halted, the men being at intervals of about ten feet.

Eagerly Uncle Sam's khaki-clad men peered down below.

There they could make out the backs of Alcante's watching Filipinos.

One after another the crouching soldiers took careful aim, each picking out an enemy to "pot."

Crack! That single revolver shot, fired by Captain Winthrop, was the signal.

Instantly the rifles of F Company rippled out.

Nor did the firing cease with one volley.

The soldiers kept on firing until their magazines were empty.

Then they paused for a moment, until they had filled their magazines once more.

Ted, from where he stood, could make out the backs of at least two-score of the insurgents.

More than a dozen of these men he saw topple over at the first fire.

It must always be remembered that the Filipino is a Malay, and therefore, when caught in a corner, as desperate a fighter as a rat driven to corner.

Though dazed by the unexpectedness of this attack from the rear, the little brown men wheeled about.

Now the air up above was full of hissing bullets, as Mausers answered piping Krag-Jorgensen rifles.

"We've got 'em now—they've got to duck," throbbed the boy soldier in deep joy.

Hardly had the words left his mouth when, in the midst of that hissing hail of steel-clad bullets, Ted Brisbane pitched and fell.

CHAPTER VIII.

ON A NIGHT SCOUT.

"Now you're down, kid, keep down."

It was Higgins' gruff voice that thus addressed our hero.

For that watchful corporal had heard Ted's exultant cry.

Just as sudden as a flash it struck Corporal Higgins that his prisoner really was delighted over his smashing blow at Alcante.

If Brisbane was delighted, then of course he must be loyal to the United States.

Thus reasoned the corporal, who was a man of sense.

Therefore he had been quick to act.

It was Higgins' foot that tripped Ted, sending that youth headlong to the ground.

"What did you trip me for?" Ted demanded, indignantly.

"So you wouldn't be hit, you chump!" returned the corporal, gruffly. "Keep down, I tell you."

Being under Higgins' watchful orders, our hero had no choice but to obey.

Still the firing went on, and fiercely, too, though those of the Filipinos who were still unharmed were fighting gradually away from their danger-bound position.

In five minutes the surprised Filipinos—those who survived the surprise, were beyond and out of view.

Captain Winthrop, afraid of another disastrous trap ahead, resolved to content himself with holding the present ground until he had had time to scout out the surrounding country.

Cr-r-r-rack! Crack! crack! rang out a new volley to the north of them.

Alcante, or whoever commanded in his place, knowing this neighborhood better than did the American commander, had found a position from which he could hold Uncle Sam's khaki-clad fighters in check for the present.

But Captain Winthrop quickly located the new position of the enemy, and directed the fire of his force against that position.

"Corporal," cried the captain, as he strode by, "keep a particularly watchful eye over your prisoner."

"Which shows," growled Higgins, half aloud, "that the captain, though a very fine man, sometimes makes mistakes!"

"Then you don't believe me a traitor, as the rest do?" quavered Ted.

"Not a bit of a traitor are you!" came the quick answer. "You wouldn't know how to sell out your comrades."

"Oh, I'd like to shake hands with you, Higgins," breathed the happier boy.

"You'd better not," came the dry retort. "It wouldn't do—yet—for me to be seen mixing paws with you. Remember, you're still a prisoner, though it's my hope you won't be for long."

Time dragged slowly after that.

From no less than three positions along the mountain slope the Filipinos developed an annoying fire.

Hemmed in thus, Captain Winthrop decided that it would be wilfully reckless to try to advance for the present.

As the hours wore on, and the fighting kept up by fitful spasms, Winthrop lost two men killed and half a dozen wounded.

Yet this was nothing to what would have been the disastrous case had it not been for our hero's warning.

The afternoon wore on. It would be dark ere long.

From the heaviness of the fire, whenever the insurgents volleyed, it was plain that Alcante had brought up more of his barefooted little brown troops.

Captain Winthrop, who had daringly exposed his own person for hours, stood up with Lieutenant Morrow at his side.

"It's a tough enough box still, Morrow, my boy," confessed the commander.

"Nothing to what it would have been, sir, if we'd been caught in the pass."

"I shudder to think of that, Morrow."

The lieutenant hesitated, about to speak.

"Well, what is it, young man?" queried the captain, smiling at his subordinate.

"About Brisbane, sir—"

"You're beginning to wonder if we did the boy an injustice?"

"Yes, sir; that's exactly it."

"It is more than possible that we did wrong him."

"I've felt uneasy about it more than once to-day, sir," confessed the young lieutenant.

"The same thoughts have been in my mind, Morrow."

"May I make a suggestion, sir?"

"Two."

"I've been thinking, sir," proposed the lieutenant, "that it would be well to take Brisbane out of arrest."

"Then you and I have been thinking along much the same lines, lad," smiled Winthrop.

"Will you release Brisbane, sir?"

"On a condition."

"Yes, sir. What?"

"We might release him from arrest, subject to review by Major Eldredge."

"Just the idea, sir," nodded the lieutenant. "And—"

"Well, Morrow?"

"If Brisbane is released from arrest, sir, he ought to have full reinstatement as a soldier."

"How?"

"We have two extra rifles, that belonged to the men killed."

"So you want to give Brisbane a chance once more to do his share of fighting?"

"Yes, sir."

"That was a good idea, Morrow."

"Then I have your permission to do it, sir?"

"Certainly. Go ahead."

Thus it happened that, a moment later, Ted Brisbane was overjoyed.

Ted got his gun, then looked wistfully at the lieutenant.

"I could take Innsley's blouse, sir, if one of the men has

an extra pair of trousers, and another extra leggings," hinted the boy.

"You want to get back into your own uniform, eh?"

"I do, sir."

"Go ahead, then. And you can have Innsley's sombrero and shoes, too. The poor fellow, being dead, won't need them any more."

It was almost too much happiness. Ted found an extra pair of trousers in the company.

With the other articles of wear he was soon rigged out once more as a sure-enough American soldier.

Oh, the joy of that welcome change!

What was that sudden ripping, tearing sound, away to the north of them?

As the eager members of F company listened they heard that volleying answered.

Also in that Filipino line just ahead of F company there was flurried excitement.

"Morrow, my boy!" cried Captain Winthrop, to his subordinate, "Major Eldredge must have heard our firing, and is moving forward to our relief."

"It must be so, sir," cried the lieutenant. "Then, in that case, the battalion has been moving forward all day, trying to locate Alcante."

"Bugler," cried Winthrop, sharply, "sound the 'commence firing.'"

With a vim F company responded.

The volleys ripped out spitefully, in the effort to tell Major Eldredge where to find his missing company.

From beyond the Filipinos slackened their fire, then stopped it.

If there is one phase of warfare that the fighting Filipino cannot endure, it is to find himself hemmed in between two fires.

Within half an hour Eldredge's column had come within communicating distance.

The battalion's advance guard reached Captain Winthrop.

The little enemy, having succeeded in withdrawing from its ticklish place, had stolen off through the jungles which Alcante and his men knew so well.

The parts of the good old battalion were united once more!

By the time that dark fell that mountain slope was thickly dotted with the white little shelter tent.

Sentries, scouts, and outposts had been thrown out. The battalion prepared to get a well-earned night's rest.

And Ted Brisbane was led before the battalion commander, a fine, white-haired old man, for judgment.

Major Eldredge listened attentively, while Ted stood silently by, fearing, yet hoping.

"Captain," announced the major, turning to Winthrop, "since your company, by using Brisbane's hint, escaped being wiped out to-day, it seems highly reasonable to suppose that he acted straight and loyally."

"That's the way it finally appeared to me, sir," rejoined the captain.

"You can fully release him, then. Corporal Brisbane, resume your rank and duties. Report to your company commander."

"Just one moment, major, if you please," begged Winthrop. "Corporal Brisbane, since I publicly put you under a cloud of disgrace that you didn't deserve, I now make my apology in public. I ask your pardon."

And the captain held out his hand, which Ted took timidly, hesitatingly.

"You are not to blame, sir," replied the young corporal. "I realize, sir, that every appearance was really against me."

"Now, report to your company commander, corporal," repeated Major Eldredge.

This Ted did, reaching his own G company, just as the welcome smell of sizzling coffee and frying bacon got on the early evening air.

While washing his hands for supper Brisbane felt a start of joy at finding that the stain came off with the use of soap and water.

After supper, therefore, Corporal Ted cleaned his entire skin, even to his hair.

Eager comrades crowded around him to hear the story of his capture and escape.

Jim Havers listened with ill-concealed disgust.

"They're making a heap of the kid, just because he lost his outpost," Jim observed to one soldier.

"Lost his outpost nothing!" came back the indignant rejoinder. "That outpost was just rushed off its feet and wiped out. Brisbane would have been killed, too, if that wicked little beauty hadn't wanted him for the torment. And to think that that little Pina had a trading permit through our camp, and all the time she was the sweetheart and spy of the bandit, Alcante!"

So Jim wandered off by himself, too sore to listen to the tale that Ted was spinning.

But in the midst of the recital an orderly strode up.

"Corporal Brisbane will report to Major Eldredge," was the message that he brought.

"Sorry to leave you, fellows," murmured Ted, as he rose and hurried away.

Eldredge and all his officers were seated on the ground under a great mahogany tree. The group had the look of being a council of war.

"Corporal," began the major, as Ted saluted, then halted and stood at attention, "I have decided to send you out to-night with a small scouting party. You will command."

Tired as he was, Ted's eyes danced at the prospect of this extra duty.

"Thank you, sir," was all Brisbane said, as he again saluted.

"We are sending you because you know Alcante by sight, if you are fortunate enough to find him."

"Yes, sir."

"And also, corporal, you know some of his intimate officers."

"Yes, sir."

"Altogether, corporal, we look upon you as being well fitted for the work. There are other scouting parties out to-night, but you will act independently of them unless you meet. You know where the enemy were when they fired last. With that as a basis, corporal, you will take six men and endeavor to find where Alcante's force is encamped. If the enemy are in more than one camp, try to find all the camps. Take your bearings by the stars, corporal, and do your work thoughtfully, for much depends upon straight information."

"Yes, sir."

"That is all. Remain out as long as necessary, but return as soon as you have real information."

"Very good, sir."

Here Captain Bentley broke in:

"Have you any choice as to men, corporal?"

"May I choose them, sir?"

"Yes."

Ted thought instantly of poor, jealous Jim Havers, who, on account of being the Slob, never got a taste of exciting duty of this kind.

"Well, sir, I'd like Havers, Frost, Lyons, Tullick, Crowe and Carson."

Bentley nodded.

"Take them, corporal."

With a final salute that included all the officers, the elated young corporal hurried back to the company street.

"Havers!" he called.

"Well," growled Jim, coming up out of the shadow.

"Get your rifle, a full belt of ammunition, and a full canteen of water. No haversack or blanket roll."

"What's up?" grunted Jim, curiously.

"Your orders," Ted smiled drily. "Captain Bentley's orders."

He quickly called off the names of the other men.

Then in silence he led them past headquarters, where an officer joined them, and informed the nearest sentry that these men had orders to leave camp.

Then out into the dark night Ted strode, his men following in single file.

Only once more did they pass Americans—a corporal and four men out on outpost.

Then, leaving all behind, Corporal Ted Brisbane plunged into the forest that hid Alcante's "army"—somewhere.

"I say," began Jim Havers, growlingly, "what are we —"

Ted halted quickly, looking his men over.

"No talking," he commanded. "And tread softly."

Ted was busy forming his plans for finding Alcante's camp in that great, mysterious forest darkness and stillness.

CHAPTER IX.

TED RUNS A BATTLE.

Your true Filipino, while a brave fighter at times, does not love hard work.

Hence when he is retreating he is likely to run away along the easiest road to travel.

Ted was aware of this peculiarity.

These little brown men, though at home in the trackless jungle, did not take to the thick over-matted brush except when compelled to in order to escape.

The first hour away from camp brought our hero's scouting party to a distance of some two miles from camp.

At every quarter mile or so they had halted, and one member of the party had climbed a tall tree, in the hope of espying a tiny campfire somewhere off in the blackness, or some other sign that would betray the presence of the enemy.

Now, at last, they had halted, fagged out, for the path was a rough one.

They were on a high slope of ground now, but still under the shadow of great trees.

"About my turn to climb," announced Ted. "Hold my gun, Havers."

Jim took the proffered rifle with an ill grace.

In a twinkling our hero was up in the lower limbs. After that scaling was easy.

Up in the top of the tree, a hundred feet from ground, Ted rested.

He was higher up than he would have been in any of the other trees, and could see the country for at least a mile around.

"Nothing doing from here," he muttered, finally. "Hold on, though—what's that?"

Eyes less sharp than his would have seen nothing.

A quarter of a mile away, perhaps, the tiniest sort of a gleam flashed.

"It has a steely look," flashed the young corporal, staring more intently.

Again the faint gleam.

"These Filipinos love to get us at close quarters, and have a bayonet scrap," muttered Ted. "If they mean business to-night, or if they expect us to advance, that little gleam ought to be the dim flash of starlight on steel. If so, that's a sentry there. And, if there's one sentry there, there must be others near by."

He stared intently.

Yes, it really seemed to him that, at other points near the first little gleam, he could make out two others.

"They're in a line, too," he quivered. "If so, that shows the direction of the line of the camp. And, by jove, that's right, too, for the camp would naturally be in that little depression in the ground, with sentries above. Hullo—gracious!"

The tiny but unmistakable glow of a campfire suddenly appeared, well inside the line marked by the gleams that the young corporal had marked out with his eyes.

Psst! he signaled down to the ground.

Back came the answer.

Three times the young corporal tapped with one foot against the trunk of the tree.

From below three answering taps came, showing that his signal was understood.

Then others began to climb. After a few moments Privates Frost, Tullick and Carson had reached their young leader's post at the top of the tree.

All could see the fire, but only Carson could make out the gleams on the bayonets of two or three of the enemy's sentries.

"That's enough," clicked Ted. "Down to the ground for us."

At the foot of the tree a hasty consultation was held.

"You'll make back to camp now, of course," hinted Jim.

"What's that?" Ted demanded, sharply.

"You'll carry the news to Eldredge?"

"And only tell him we think that's where the Filipino camp is?"

"Why, you know, don't you?" grunted Havers.

"Know? Of course we don't," rejoined Ted, and two or three of his men smiled. "All we know is that we saw something over there. Do you think I'd go back to camp and hurry the battalion out to what may be nothing but a Filipino trick—a trap?"

"Well, what are you going to do then?"

"Spread our little line out thinly," Ted answered promptly. "We'll go through the forest over there a hundred yards apart. In that way we can cover a good deal of what looks like the line of Alcante's camp. We'll get close enough to make sure that there's a real camp there. Then we'll come back and make our way back to the battalion."

"Ugh! I don't like that," grunted Jim Havers. "I don't mind meeting the little brown rascals in battle. But going alone through the woods at night, with every chance of meeting a gang that'll slash you open with bolos—ugh!"

"I thought you were a soldier, Havers," spoke Ted, quietly. "Here's our work cut out for us, and we've got to do it. Now, men, get as close to the enemy's lines as you can without being caught. Make sure that there is a line of sentries, and that there's a real camp behind them. Tullick, stay where you are for five minutes. Then go cautiously forward through the forest. When you've got your information, come back and wait for us. Now, the rest follow me."

Ted marched his line off, leaving a man at every hundred yards.

Havers the young corporal kept next in the line to himself.

"Now, start in about a minute, Jim," our hero whispered. "And don't ever again make the mistake of talking as you did five minutes ago! If they call you the Slob now, the men will soon begin to call you the cold foot. Get in, now, old fellow, and don't bring back any news of what you don't see. Jim, I picked you for this detail so you'd have a chance to make a showing. You don't want to remain a private forever. Now, get your grit together and push on into the forest. If you get into trou-

ble I'll be close on one side, and Carson on the other. March!"

Ted himself hurried forward, and soon was treading cautiously in the direction of the supposed camp.

It was work that men with nerve could do. All that it required was a light foot and a cool head.

Ted himself got within forty feet of a drowsy little brown sentinel.

Not far behind this sentry, who paced all unconscious that at least one sharp pair of American eyes were watching him, were hasty shelters built of boughs of young trees—officers' shelters beyond a doubt, for, past these shelters, the bodies of men could be seen lying on the ground.

"That's all I need to know," thought the young soldier.

Withdrawing softly, he tried to cut in on Jim's course.

But no Jim was there.

Going further back from the camp the young corporal came upon the Slob, seated on the ground, his back against a tree, his rifle clutched nervously.

He started guiltily as Brisbane glided up, then leaped to his feet.

"So?" quivered the young corporal. "It's true."

"What's true?"

"You're a cold-foot!"

Starting, trembling, Jim Havers tried to swing the muzzle of his rifle around on the young corporal.

But Ted caught at the barrel of the gun.

"None of that!" he ordered sternly. "About face! Walk on ahead of me."

"But what are you going to——" quavered Jim.

"Going to shoot you for cowardice in the face of the enemy, if I have to," Ted Brisbane whispered back, sternly. "For heaven's sake, Jim, brace up! March!"

Sulkily Jim obeyed.

Suddenly the young corporal straightened up, peered through between the trees, and whispered:

"Halt, Jim!"

"What's up?" asked Havers, nervously.

"See that light through there?"

"No. Yes, I do, though, as the light gleamed once ahead of them. "What is it, anyway?"

"I mean to find out," voiced Ted.

"What's the use?"

"My orders are that, if there is more than one Filipino camp, I am to find both."

"Good Lord! Going to run up against bolo men, anyway?"

"We've got to find out what that light is."

"Then I'll wait, while you go ahead, Ted."

"You'll keep on ahead of me, just as you've been doing," retorted the young corporal, so positively that Jim gave in without a murmur.

"Why, it's a regular house—a small one," whispered Ted, as they got closer.

The light had disappeared, but now they were close

enough to make out the outlines of a low, one-story native building of bamboo and thatch.

"Where are you going?" demanded Jim, trying to halt.

"Going up to that house. So are you!"

Jim would have balked, but he felt sure that Ted would kill him for cowardice. It is a non-commissioned officer's duty, in war-time, to kill a cowardly soldier if he cannot make him obey.

No one appeared or opposed their passage as the two young soldiers trod softly across the little clearing that surrounded the bamboo house.

As they drew nearer, a gleam through a crack in the wall showed them that a figure was moving about, though that individual's feet made no noise.

"Look in and see what's happening," directed our hero, when they were almost at the nearest wall.

Jim obeyed, then turned, his eyes gleaming.

"It's a Chino, with a trap-door up in the floor," he whispered, hoarsely. "A miser, I'll bet!"

"Chino" is the Spanish word for Chinaman that is used in the Philippines. Many of the wealthiest men in the islands are Chinos. Some of these Chinese merchants hoard great wealth.

"Don't try to get away," whispered Ted, sternly.

"Get away from a Chino, with gold hidden under his house?" repeated Jim, hoarsely. "What do you take me for?"

Ted Brisbane applied his own eyes to a crack in the wall.

What he saw was a single room inside, squalidly furnished and ill-smelling.

A Chinaman, in soft, felt-soled shoes, was bending over a trap-door in the floor.

Even as our hero looked, however, the yellow man straightened up, after having fitted the door closely into place in the floor.

As he turned, the Chino proved to be old, weazened, bent.

He was garbed only in blouse and in trousers that came down to his bare knees.

"Doesn't look like a very rich man," murmured Ted to himself. "But I'd give something to know what's in that little cellar."

"Going in?" whispered Jim in the young corporal's ear.

"Yes," he announced. "Follow me."

Stepping softly over to the door, our hero gave it a pull. It opened at once.

Hearing the sound, the Chino turned swiftly, his little, narrow eyes blinking in fright.

"Keep quiet! Sabe that?" asked Ted, pointing the muzzle of his rifle at the terrified fellow.

"He won't make any noise now," grinned Havers.

"Pull up that trap-door."

Had they not seen it open a moment ago it is doubtful if either would have discovered the closely-fitted trap in that dirty floor.

But Jim had it up in a twinkling.

"Ask the little brown men!" chortled Ted. "Say, they are running yet. And here goes the last of our attack!"

For the firecrackers forced from the Chino had given out.

"Wait here for the crowd," directed Ted. "And don't let this Chino get away!"

Carson, then Tullick, then the others, one by one, appeared, all grinning over the trick that had sent the Filipinos plunging backward through the forest—the trick that was even now hurling Alcante's band back upon the real rifles of Eldredge's battalion.

"Hear that?" cried Ted, suddenly.

Over to the northward real Krag's were now ripping out. The Filipinos had fallen upon the battalion, alarmed from its night's rest, and hurried forward into action.

"Poor little brown imps!" chuckled Ted. "They're afraid of what they're up against now, and they're afraid to fall back this way where we're so strong on volleys!"

"Hadn't we better try to get back before the stragglers come this way?" hinted Private Tullick.

"That's the surest thing on earth," nodded Ted. "Come on! We'll try to get around the end. The firing will give us a route."

For ten minutes they hurried through the forest, the sounds of real night battle guiding them.

Plunging along blindly in the darkness, Ted and his squad suddenly felt their hair rise.

Ahead, a mad medley of war-yells, then the rush of many feet toward them—the onslaught of a company of bolo men.

And from somewhere close at hand was heard Pina's shrill voice:

"Kill their leader!"

CHAPTER X.

THE AMERICAN GIRL IN PERIL.

"Stand close together! Fire like blazes!" roared Ted.

Seven men, hampered by a scared Chinaman, found themselves about to be borne down before the rush of what looked to be a hundred bolo men.

It is these bolo men who wear most on the nerves of American soldiers.

Armed with keen, heavy knives, these fanatical bolo men rush in, indifferent to certain death provided there is a chance to slash a few Americanos to death.

Crack! crack! ripped out the Krag's, as the rush started.

Ted's men had all but unconsciously fallen shoulder to shoulder.

Their rifles spit fire—hissed death!

Even these frenzied bolo men staggered back for an instant.

But Pina, on the flank, shrieked hoarsely:

"Cowards! Are you afraid? Kill every Americano!"

Ted wheeled, saw her stealing upon him, knife in hand. Like a flash he turned and bounded at her. Being on the flank, while her bolo men were ahead, the girl was alone.

Whump! The barrel of Ted's rifle fell across her wrist, knocking the knife to the ground.

Then, before she could realize what had happened, Pina felt herself snatched up in the young corporal's arms.

Three steps back to the squad Ted bore her.

"Stop the fighting, or we kill Alcante's sweetheart!" he roared in Spanish over all the din.

Dropping his own rifle, he held Pina helpless, though she turned on him with the fury of the wildcat, trying to scratch out his hated American eyes.

Ted got her arms pinned to her side then held her so that the wavering bolo men could see her.

"Kill the Americanos!" implored Pina, sobbingly, as the rush stopped and the firing ceased. "Never mind me. It does not matter what happens to me."

"Tell your general she said so," jeered Ted.

Despite the girl's appeals, the bolo men were afraid to renew the attack, which, thus far, had been bloodless for the Americans.

"Fall back there! Vanish in the forest! As much as show yourselves, or even follow us, and I give you this girl's body to carry to your general!" bluffed the young corporal.

Almost in a twinkling the bolo men had faded into the blackness of the forest beyond.

Away over to the northward the firing still continued heavily.

Evidently feeling himself to be between two fires, Alcante had plainly determined to put up the best fight possible.

The men of the squad, all except Jim, who was still taking care of John Chinaman, had spread themselves out so that Ted could not be suddenly overwhelmed by a rush from the enemy.

In this fashion they proceeded. Doubtless they were followed, shadowed, and closely, too, by stealthy, prowling Filipinos.

But plainly there was no way to rescue this young girl, beloved by their general—no way to rush in to her rescue ere this determined young American corporal could carry out his threat of killing her.

Had they but known the American character the Filipinos would have realized how difficult it would be for Ted to kill a girl. But they judged the Americanos by themselves!

A half an hour more. They were around the ends of the opposing forces now, as judged by the firing.

"We're back of the American line, at last," Ted announced. "Now, it's only a matter of joining the battalion."

"Let me go," pleaded Pina, meek and even tearful now.

"I don't believe we can," Ted declared, grimly.

He was still carrying her slight form in his arms, and she had ceased to resist.

"Let me go, and you will not be sorry," pleaded the girl.

"What will you do in return?" hinted young Brisbane.

"Perhaps I could tell of an American girl, who ought to be rescued."

"Where is she?"

"Safe in Filipino hands."

"Who is she?"

"I shall tell you no more," pouted Pina.

"Because there is nothing more to tell," laughed Ted.

"This Chino knows something about that matter," called Havers. "I saw the yellow monkey prick up his ears."

"Carry this girl a while, won't you, Jim?" asked Ted. "I'm tired. Take blamed good care, though, that she doesn't get away from you."

Ted transferred his burden to Havers, then fell back beside the Chino.

"Now, John," said Ted with grim persuasiveness when he had forced the Chinaman to drop back some distance, "what do you know about that American girl who is a prisoner among the Filipinos?"

"Me no savvy nothing," asserted the fire-cracker merchant, stolidly.

"Yes, you do, and you're going to tell me, John, or I'm going to kill you! Now, then, talk!"

As Ted spoke he took his own rifle from a comrade, shot back the bolt, and appeared prepared to kill the yellow man then and there.

It was difficult to get the Chinaman's tongue unloosed, but when he did talk he talked by yards.

Some ten miles from this present spot, up in a mountain gully never yet visited by the American soldiers, stood a crude shack in which an American girl had been held prisoner for months.

Two Filipino women attended her. Three fierce Filipinos guarded that shack.

The natives themselves would sooner die than betray the whereabouts of this young American girl. The Chinese knew that they would die if they undertook to tell the hated Americanos.

But now this John Chinaman preferred to tell Ted, and take a chance on Filipino assassination, rather than face the certainty that our hero would kill him if he didn't talk.

Yes, the Chino admitted that he had seen the prisoner.

"Describe her," Ted commanded.

He listened then thrilled from head to foot.

"Guardia!" he throbbed. "Then she was not killed but lives! It must be Guardia—it is!"

How Corporal Ted Brisbane tingled. For therein lay the one tender spot in his present rough life.

Guardia Cortright, daughter of the colonel of the good old Forty-second.

Back in barracks down at Zamboanga, Ted had often seen the beautiful girl.

Sixteen, the sole child and hope of Colonel Cortright.

She had often smiled at Ted when she saw him about the barracks grounds. She had smiled at him as she might have done at any other bright young soldier.

But those smiles had fired Ted, electrified him.

As an enlisted man he could not hope to pay attentions to Guardia.

But as an officer all was possible.

That had been the start of the boy's ambition to become an officer.

Months before, during a stroll out into the country surrounding Zamboanga, Guardia had become separated from her companions.

That had been the last ever seen of her. Chinos, undoubtedly paid by the Filipinos, had brought in the report that she had been murdered by bandits.

Colonel Cortright had become prematurely aged when he gave up hoping to see his daughter again in this life.

Broken, he had remained on garrison duty, an almost worthless officer, while his majors handled the Forty-second in its field work.

Ted, too, had despaired for many a day.

Youth is elastic, however. He had finally determined to become an officer, anyway, though he had always mourned that, when an officer, he could not hope to call on the bright-faced Guardia.

"But she's alive—if I've stumbled upon anything at all this bewildering night!" throbbed the young corporal. "Guardia! And the slave of these brown wretches!"

Ted questioned the Chino with frantic purpose.

No; Guardia, though a prisoner, had been treated with no indignities. She had been kept a close prisoner—that was all—by Alcante's orders.

"It isn't hard to understand," quivered Ted. "Alcante, feeling that he must be captured one of these days, has kept Guardia close prisoner, and even has circulated stories of her death, feeling that to produce her finally would give him only the stronger hold upon the American authorities. And that dear girl ten miles from here!"

For one brief, mad moment Ted Brisbane, feeling that he was in command of this little squad, and that he had performed his sole duty of locating Alcante's camp, was tempted to order his tired men to turn about. The Chinaman could guide them, if they could get through the bandit-infested forests.

"Oh, no, no, no!" half-sobbed the young corporal. "It would be madness. Besides, I'm in command here, and I have no right to go beyond orders. But Major Eldredge will act. He will do far better than I. Besides—why, what a doddering idiot I am! We can exchange Pina for Guardia. Pina is our hostage for Guardia's safety!"

Calling to Private Tullick to guard the Chinaman, Ted strode forward to Havers' side.

Pina was being carried in that hulking fellow's arms.

"There are the American lines over there, barely an eighth of a mile away," Ted declared. "We are almost up with our comrades. Little Pina, you shall be a hostage

in our camp—a hostage for the safety and the return of Guardia Cortright. I have found out who the American girl prisoner is!”

Pina, riding in Jim’s arms, bent forward in the darkness to scan Ted Brisbane’s face.

Then her own woman’s instinct told her to read the glow that was in the young corporal’s eyes.

“You love that American girl?” jeered Pina. “Yes, I can see it in your face. And I, who hate you, can punish you through that American girl. Good! It shall be done!”

Ted quivered, as if a viper had stung him.

Then he smiled again, as he realized how swiftly Alcante would give up the American girl prisoner to secure the release of his own brown little sweetheart.

“She is quite safe,” he smiled. “I do not worry, Pina.”

Ted fell back to force more information from the Chinaman.

Suddenly there was a yell ahead, the sound of an oath, and then a frantic shout of:

“There she goes! There she is!”

His heart up in his mouth, Ted bounded forward.

Jim Havers leaned against a tree, clutching at his chest, where Pina had stabbed him with the tiny stiletto from her hair.

Stabbing, she had broken away from her carrier, and had bounded off into the dark shadows under the trees.

Ted himself leaped in wild pursuit.

Yet he found himself as much at sea as his comrades.

Pina had escaped into the darkness. She could not be found.

“Good heavens!” gasped Ted, stopping short and shaking like a leaf. “If that little fiend in petticoats ever gets back to the Filipino lines, she suspects that I love Guardia! She knows it! My poor little girl sweetheart will pay the penalty of the hate that Pina feels for me! Merciful heaven!”

For a few moments Ted faltered. Then, realizing that he could not hope to find Pina in that great, black forest when once she had vanished, he got his squad together. Havers, though bleeding, was not dangerously hurt.

Now, for the first time, he realized that the battle had stopped, for the time being, at any rate.

Yet, within three minutes, Corporal Ted and his squad, still with the Chino prisoner, were halted by a sentry of Eldredge’s battalion.

CHAPTER XI.

CORPORAL TED AT BAY.

In the gray of the short tropical dawn Major Eldredge jumped to his feet as if a Filipino bullet had stung him.

“Guardia Cortright alive—a prisoner!” the old officer quavered.

Corporal Ted stood again before the little council of officers.

Burning with the news as to his sweetheart, Ted had been forced, by stiff military discipline, to tell the events of the night in their order.

His brilliant trick with the fire-crackers, forcing the Filipinos squarely down upon the American rifles, had been warmly praised by his commander.

Then had Ted found chance, unforbidden, to come at last to the news with which he burned.

“Bring that Chino up! I must talk with him!” roared the major.

Startled, the Chino was yet made to repeat what he had told to Ted in the jungle.

Now, indeed, the major forgot his joy over the battle.

Alcante had been badly defeated, losing some three hundred of his bandits, besides scores more of casualties in the way of wounded men.

All indications were that Alcante’s command had received its death-blow—that the bandit would find his power and influence among the natives gone after this last disastrous battle.

Alcante, in a word, would find within the next few days that his followers no longer cared to follow him in defiance of the American authorities.

But as yet this insurgent chief was still well-nigh supreme in that country over beyond the American lines.

For to-day at least “General” Alcante held the power of life and death over Guardia Cortright!

That much Major Eldredge understood as he paced tremblingly up and down before his headquarters tent, that had just been erected.

“We must get a column there, somehow.”

“The smaller the column the better its chance of success,” hinted Captain Bentley.

“Yes, yes! I know!” groaned the old major. “It must be a swift little column—one that can get on the ground and hold it until the whole battalion arrives. For that is what I shall do—march with my whole force to give Cortright’s daughter one chance for her life—if it really be true that she still lives!”

For a few moments the major remained in deep thought. Then:

“Mr. Morrow!”

“Yes, sir,” hailed the lieutenant, stepping forward.

“You will take forty men and push on at the greatest speed possible. Try to avoid conflict with the insurgents. Your whole duty is to reach Guardia Cortright.”

“I understand, sir.”

“And, Morrow, take Corporal Brisbane with you. When you get within two or three miles of that mountain gulch, send the corporal and a very few men—with the Chino for their guide—on a run ahead of you. You will follow, and, if you reach Cortright’s daughter alive, you will protect her, against all odds, until the battalion comes up.”

“I shall have my men ready inside of three minutes, sir,” announced Lieutenant Morrow.

While the young officer was attending to the detail of his forty men, Ted found chance to go over to Havers.

"How's the wound, Jim?"

"Oh, it stuck a rib, and didn't go through, you know," answered the Slob. "I bled a fearful lot, but the blood has stopped coming. I'd give two months' pay, though, to get hold of the little tike who planted that piece of steel against my ribs!"

"Jim," proposed our hero, earnestly, "why don't you redeem your cold feet of last night by going out with this column?"

"Haven't been asked."

"Would you like to go? I'll ask the lieutenant."

"See here, Ted Brisbane, if I go with this column, and behave all right, will you stop calling me a cold-foot?"

"And glad to," Ted agreed, promptly. "Jim, I don't like to have to think of any soldier in the regular army as a cold-foot."

"Go and ask your lieutenant, then."

Jim Havers was in that little, flying column when it started out, almost at the double-quick, within the promised three minutes.

Half way down the line Ted trudged.

He was sore and fagged out.

Yet his whole agonized thought was of Guardia, and of the chances of saving her yet.

Wearily the miles were plodded over that rough jungle series of paths.

Yet the flying column hardly ever halted for rest.

The Chino alone complained. But even he stopped finding fault with the pace when he found that every new protest from his lips brought him a jab from a soldier's bayonet.

The forest, as the column marched, appeared to be free of Alcante's bandits.

If they hovered within touch, at least they did not attack or harass.

But at last, streaming with the perspiration of the long-kept-up march, the column halted.

Lieutenant Morrow pointed to a mountain ahead.

"Corporal Brisbane, this is the point where you take the freshest men and push on ahead."

"Thank heaven!" came devoutly from the soldier boy's lips.

"Pick out your men, then—six of them. If you come upon Guardia Cortright alive, protect her if it takes all your lives. If we hear firing we'll come on a run to your support. Hustle, now, corporal, and heaven grant you luck! That's the prayer of every officer and man in the regiment."

"You'll go with me, Jim," nudged Ted, and then quickly chose the others.

To Jim again fell the task of guarding the Chino.

That weazened little old fellow, pushed to the front of Corporal Ted's squad, would have argued against the speed at which he was forced to go, had he not known that his life would be the price.

Ted took now no thought of distance. He kept beside the Chinese guide, whom Jim pricked into a run, the others of the little squad trotting behind.

A swift-flowing creek stopped their course at last.

"Swim!" declared Ted.

"No; boat up there. And house not far from here," replied the Chinaman, pointing up the stream.

Three hundred yards along the bank, and they came upon the boat—one of American make, that the insurgents down at the coast had captured at some time and had sent up into the interior as a trophy of war.

A few lusty pulls, and the boat beached on the opposite bank.

"Now, you velly near," whispered the Chinaman, beginning to tremble.

Up from the bank the Chinaman tremblingly pointed the way through the jungle brush. Within three minutes their yellow guide pointed to an opening that led into a gulch.

"You go through there, and maybe you see," he whispered unsteadily.

"Don't you try to bolt, John, until we do see!" Ted warned, grimly.

"House there, all right," maintained the Chinaman.

"Shut up your talking, then!"

The entrance to the gulch was through something of a gateway in a cliff wall.

Into this opening the squad stole, Ted quiveringly leading.

"Oh! Oh! Oh!"

A girl's wail of agony came suddenly to their ears as the men in American khaki sped through this opening in the cliff.

Then they came upon a scene that made their blood burn hotly.

Guardia Cortright—Ted Brisbane knew her at the first glance—running from one of the three men who guarded against her escape, had just been caught by another.

Swish! The third of those keepers brought a bamboo switch down across her back.

It was the last thing he ever did.

Dropping to one knee, with steady hand on the trigger, and true eye blazing through the gun-sights, Corporal Ted fired.

Over tumbled the Filipino with the switch—shot clean through the head.

There were other swift reports.

Guardia Cortright's three savage keepers were lying in the dust.

As for the girl, at sound of the first shot, she had wheeled and had caught sight of the dear old, familiar khaki uniforms.

Two Filipino women had run out of the native house close by, but these had thrown themselves down on the ground beside the dead natives.

Guardia, her arms outstretched, her hair streaming behind, sped forward on swift feet.

"You needn't hurry—or fear!" Ted called joyously, as he rose with his smoking rifle. "There are men enough here to protect you!"

Guardia, in her excitement, ran straight up to the handsome young corporal, throwing her arms convulsively around his neck.

In her moment of uncontrollable joy she did not know what she said.

It came, therefore, surely, from the heart.

"Ted! You, of all men."

The others hardly heard.

But young Corporal Brisbane did. It made him happier than he had ever been in his life before.

"You're safe now, dear girl," he murmured, he, too, hardly knowing what he said. "There's a strong party close at hand, and the whole battalion headed this way!"

Yet, as if in mockery, a harsh cry rang out further up the gully.

Corporal Ted looked, gasped.

Fully forty Filipinos—and led by Alcante himself—had shot themselves into sight.

Riflemen, bolo men, officers, armed in every manner known to the insurgents, were rushing madly and furiously on.

"Fire!" yelled Ted, pushing the girl aside.

The American rifles spoke.

"Parker! Carey! Get this dear girl to the boat. Get her across the water—join the lieutenant! Your lives are nothing, for hers is at stake!"

Private Carey wasted no time. He snatched Guardia up in his arms and sped away, with his comrade at his side.

For a moment the Filipinos had halted, for they had lost five of their number.

But Alcante's reinforcements, to the number of a score more of fighting men, appeared.

"Fire!" screamed the insurgent chief. "Wipe out the Americans!"

Crack! Ted Brisbane took cool aim and fired, yet missed Alcante by a hair's-breadth.

Now came the returning fire.

Two of Ted's men dropped, one of them instantly killed.

From their knees the Americans fired fast and furious, holding even this large force of the enemy back.

Another of Ted's men went down, with three bullets through him.

And Jim Havers, his right arm stung by a Mauser bullet, shifted his gun to the left.

Ted's own magazine was empty.

"Rush them! Don't let the girl get away!" bellowed Alcante.

How Ted longed for one shot, to finish that horrible wretch!

Then came another swift, agonizing thought:

"Jim, we'll be needed to cover the boat. We mustn't be killed here! Scoot with me!"

Up and away they flew, straight for the creek.

As they ran, they kept as widely apart as they possibly could.

Bullets followed them as the Filipinos pursued.

But the little brown men, as if sure of their game, did not come on as fast as they might have done.

As the two American fugitives got within sight of the water they saw the boat containing the girl and her two protectors reach the opposite bank.

"Go as fast as you can!" yelled Ted. "If you fail you can never face the general again!"

"The general" was the affectionate name they gave, in the regiment, to their colonel, who was, in fact, a brevet-brigadier.

Just before he wheeled and went down on one knee at the bank, the soldier boy saw Carey and his comrade vanish into the jungle on the other bank, the girl between them.

There was just time for these two comrades to load their magazines when the Filipinos came in sight.

Vigorously the American rifles cracked, at point-blank range, for a few seconds.

Then Jim Havers keeled over, and did not stir.

Sting! Ted Brisbane felt something sharp at his left temple, just where he had bound a cloth loosely to protect his head from the sun's fierce rays.

It must have been a wound to do this, he thought, swiftly, as he fell over backward.

From the other bank came the hail in a soldier's hearty voice:

"Hold the fort, kid, and we'll be there!"

Ted's rifle was empty. No time to reload, for now the Filipino rush was upon him.

Just in that nick of time Ted recollected the revolver hanging at his hip—the one handed him that morning by Major Eldredge.

Drawing it, while he rested, wobbly, on his left hand, Brisbane began to fire.

"We're coming, kid!" came the hail, to the fast splash of oars.

Rescue coming, but what a mockery!

Ted saw almost a dozen bolomen almost within arm's reach of him, and others flourishing firearms.

He had two shots left, now, in the revolver.

Crack!

"One down, anyway!" jeered the young corporal, aiming his last shot.

"I've saved the general to-day—by sending his daughter back to him!" flashed through the boy's mind.

It was dying a soldier's death—this!

He pulled the trigger of his revolver, then fell under the rush of bare brown feet, and that was the last he knew.

CHAPTER XII.

CONCLUSION.

What had happened?

This wasn't a bed on the dirt.

That was the last place where Ted remembered to have been.

Why, this was actually a bed with a soft white sheet over a mattress!

That much Corporal Ted realized before he opened his eyes.

Truth to tell, he didn't open his eyes right away.

He didn't want the jolt of coming back to actual life.

There was one thing that was real, anyway. His head ached right over the left temple.

That was in line with his last recollection at the creek's bank.

That was just before he fired that last shot of all, and, as he remembered now, at Alcante.

"Did I get the wretch?" murmured Ted.

Anxiety to know made him open his eyes.

Ho, ho! What a ridiculous dream this was, after all.

Why, this was a bedroom that he saw before his fevered gaze.

There wasn't anything like this anywhere short of Zamboanga.

That was where Colonel Cortright—"the General," as they called him in the regiment—had his official residence.

"Did Guardia get through safely?" he murmured, weakly. "That has got to be settled."

"Did I hear my name spoken?" asked a sweet, low voice, and a cool hand rested on his hot forehead.

There was Guardia's dear face right before his.

"You're—you're safe?" gasped Brisbane, wonderingly.

"Safe?" smiled Guardia. "Don't you see that I am—and yourself, also, Ted?"

"But what place is this, dear girl?"

"A room in our home in Zamboanga," answered the girl. "But don't try to talk much now—there's a dear fellow."

She placed her cool hand beside his hot cheek. He nestled against it for a few moments, then drew restlessly away.

"What's the matter?" she asked, gently.

"I forgot myself," stammered Ted, weakly.

"How?"

"I—I was a little too familiar."

"In what way?" asked Guardia, opening her eyes in surprise.

"Well, I—I—you know, Miss Cortright, you are the general's daughter, and I—I—am—only an enlisted man."

"You haven't known anything for three weeks," laughed the girl, softly, "and so you don't know all that has hap-

pened. Do you remember some of the things you did before you got that wound in the head? Do you know what they do for soldiers who perform such deeds?"

"What?" asked Ted, wonderingly.

"Well, in your case, the President, who has been informed by cable, has replied by cable that you are to be a second lieutenant."

"An—an officer?" swallowed Ted, unbelievably.

"That's it," cried Guardia, delightedly. "And everyone in the old Forty-second says you were always just cut out for an officer, anyway."

"But how can a fellow who isn't of age become a second lieutenant?" begged bewildered Ted.

"Congress passed a special act permitting the President to do it," supplied Guardia. "But now don't talk any more, please. You're an officer, and that ought to be happiness enough for one day."

"It isn't, though," protested Ted, soberly.

"What else is needed?"

"A—a—you won't think me cheeky, Guardia?"

"No, no! What else is needed?"

"A—a kiss!"

"That doesn't require the President and Congress," whispered the girl, as she bent a rosy face closer to his.

Ted is a first lieutenant now, and will be a captain ere long.

Then Guardia will be Mrs. Captain Brisbane. But Brisbane is her last name already.

Ted's last revolver shot had killed Alcante. Pina died soon after in a small-pox plague.

As for Jim Havers? A model soldier in these days, and has been ever since he recovered from his wound. He is first sergeant in Ted's company, and may be an officer yet.

It was Ted who brought Havers to realize what being a soldier meant.

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